

Sons and Lovers

D. H. LAWRENCE

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SONS AND LOVERS

Type of work : Novel
Author : D.H. Lawrence (1885-1930)
Type of plot : Psychological realism
Time of plot : Late nineteenth century
Locale : England.
First published : 1913

Principal Characters :

Gertrude Morel, a devoted mother
Walter Morel, her husband, a collier
William, her oldest son
Aunie, her daughter
Paul, her favourite son
Arthur, another son
Miriam Leivers, Paul's sweetheart
Clara Dawes, Paul's mistress
Baxter Dawes, Clara's husband

Critique :

Sons and Lovers is a realistic novel developing two significant psychological themes. The first is the story of Paul Morel's beautiful but terrible relationship with his mother, who gives to him all her warmth of feeling because her husband has denied her the love she craves. The second is a study of attraction and repulsion in love, presented through Paul's relations with two quite different women, Clara and Miriam. It is, on the whole, a tragic story of work, love, and despair. Lawrence's psychological insight and the poetry of his style make this novel one of the great landmarks in modern autobiographical fiction.



DAVID HERBERT LAWRENCE
1885-1930

SONS AND LOVERS

~~POETRY BY~~
D. H. LAWRENCE

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The Early Married Life of the Monks

"*Two Seasons*" succeeded to "*Hill Row*." *Hill Row* was a block of thatched, bulging cottages that stood by the brook-side as *Greenhill Lane*. There lived the colliers who worked in the *Red* glau-pits two fields away. The brook ran under the alder-trees, scarcely veiled by these small reeds, whose coal was drawn to the surface by donkeys that plodded wearily in a circle round a pit. And all over the countryside were these same pits, some of which had been worked in the time of *Charles III.*, the few colliers and the donkeys burrowing down like ants into the earth, making queer mounds and little black pillars among the corn-fields and the meadows. And the cottages of these colliers, in *Widda* and *paire* here and there, together with odd farms and houses of the stockingers, straying over the parish, formed the village of *Stennard*.

Then, some story years ago, a sudden change took place. The glau-pits were disposed aside by the large veins of the *freestones*. The coal and iron field of *Nottinghamshire* and *Derbyshire* was discovered. *Garron, Waite and Co.* appeared. Amid tremendous excitement, *Lord Palmerston* formally opened the company's first mine at *Spiney Park*, on the edge of *Shrewsbury Forest*.

About this time the notorious *Hill Row*, which through growing old had acquired an evil reputation, was burnt down, and much dirt was cleared away.

Garron, Waite and Co. found they had struck on a good thing, so, down the valleys of the brooks from *Selby* and *Musall*, new mines were sunk, until soon there were six pits working. From *Musall*, high up on the sandstone among the woods, the railway ran, past the ruined gallery of the *Cathedral* and past *Robin Hood's Well*, down to *Spiney Park*, then on to *Milnes*, a large mine among corn-fields; from *Milnes* across the farm-lands of the valley to *Bushier's Hill*, branching off there, and running north to *Beegwater* and *Selby*, that looks over at *Crith* and the hills of *Derbyshire*; six mines like black streaks on the countryside, linked by a long of five chains, the railway.

To accommodate the regiments of miners, *Garron, Waite and*

Co. built the squares, great quadrangles of dwellings on the hillside of Bearwood, and then, in the truck valley, on the site of Hell Row, they erected the *Bortams*.

The *Bortams* consisted of six blocks of miners' dwellings, two rows of three, like the dots on a black-six domino, and twelve houses in a block. This double row of dwellings sat at the foot of the rather steep slope from Bearwood, and looked out, from the attic windows at least, on the slow slink of the valley towards Jeffrey.

The houses themselves were substantial and very decent. One could walk all round, seeing little front gardens with azaleas and nasturges in the shadow of the bottom block, sweet-williams and pinks in the sunny top block; seeing neat front windows, little porches, little privy hedges, and dormer windows for the attics. But that was outside: that was the view on to the unshaded pastures of all the miners' wives. The dwelling-room, the kitchen, was at the back of the house, facing inward between the blocks, looking at a scrubby back garden, and then at the *ash-pits*. And between the rows, between the long lines of *ash-pits*, went the alley, where the children played and the women gossip and the men smoked. So, the actual conditions of living in the *Bortams*, that was so well built and that looked so nice, were quite unsavoury because people must live in the kitchen, and the kitchen opened on to that nasty alley of *ash-pits*.

Mrs. Morel was not anxious to move into the *Bortams*, which was already twelve years old and on the downward path, when she descended to it from Bearwood. But it was the best she could do. Moreover, she had an end house in one of the top blocks, and that had only one neighbour; on the other side an extra strip of garden. And, having an end house, she enjoyed a kind of aristocracy among the other women of the "between" houses, because her rent was five shillings and she gave instead of five shillings a week. But this superiority in station was not much consolation to Mrs. Morel.

She was thirty-one years old, and had been married eight years. A rather small woman, of delicate mould but resolute bearing, she struck a little from the first contact with the *Bortams* women. She came down in the July, and in the September expected her third baby.

Her husband was a miner. They had only been in their new home three weeks when the wates, or fall, began. Morel, she knew, was sure to make a holiday of it. He went off early on the Monday morning, the day of the fall. The two children were highly excited. William, a boy of seven, fed off immediately after breakfast, to peep round the wates ground, leaving Annie, who

was only five, to whine all morning to go also. Mrs. Morel did her work. She usually knew her neighbours yet, and knew no one with whom to trust the little girl. So she promised to take her to the water after dinner.

William appeared at half-past twelve. He was a very active lad, fair-haired, freckled, with a touch of the Dane or Norwegian about him.

"Can I have my dinner, mother?" he cried, rushing in with his cap on. "Cause it begins at half-past one, the man says so."

"You can have your dinner as soon as it's done," replied the mother.

"Isn't it done?" he cried, his blue eyes staring at her in indignation. "Then I'm going to eat it."

"You'll do nothing of the sort. It will be done in five minutes. It is only half-past twelve."

"They'll be beginning!" the boy half-cried, half-shouted.

"You won't die if they do," said the mother. "Besides, it's only half-past twelve, so you've a full hour."

The lad began hastily to lay the table, and already the dinner was down. They were eating butter-pudding and jam, when the boy jumped off his chair and stood perfectly still. Some distance away could be heard the first small braying of a merry-go-round, and the moaning of a horse. His face quivered as he looked at his mother.

"I told you!" he said, turning to the dinner for his cap.

"Take your pudding in your hand—and it's only five past one, so you were wrong—you haven't got your response," cried the mother in a breath.

The boy came back, bitterly disappointed, for his response, that went off without a word.

"I want to go, I want to go," said Annie, beginning to cry.

"Well, and you shall go, whining, whining like a child!" said the mother. And later in the afternoon she straggled up the hill under the tall hedge with her child. The hay was gathered from the fields, and carts were turned on to the ridge. It was warm, peaceful.

Mrs. Morel did not like the water. There were two sets of horses, one going by steam, and pulled round by a pony; three organs were grinding, and there came odd cracks of pistol-shots, fearful screaming of the innocent man's rattle, shouts of the Aunt Sally man, scowls from the peep-show lady. The mother perceived her son gazing enraptured outside the Lion Wallace booth, at the picture of the famous lion that had killed a negro and chained for life two white men. She left him alone, and went to get Annie a cup of milk. Presently the lad stood in front of her, wildly excited.

EARLY MARRIED LIFE OF THE MORRIS

"You never told you was coming—ain't that a lot of things?—that little killed those men—I've spent my supper—an' look here."

He pulled from his pocket two egg-cups, with pink moss-rose on them.

"I got these from that girl where y'are to get them machine in them holes. An' I got them too in two goes—'specially a go—they've got moss-rose on, look here. I wanted them."

She knew he wanted them for her.

"H'at?" she said, pleased. "They are pretty!"

"Shall you carry 'em, 'cause I'm frightened o' breakin' 'em?"

He was rapt of excitement now she had come, and had about the ground, showed her everything. Then, at the prospect, she explained the pictures, in a sort of story, in which he listened as if spellbound. He would not leave her. All the time he stuck close to her, holding with a small boy's pride of her. For no other woman looked with a lady at the dirt, in her faded black bonnet and her cloak. She walked where she saw women she knew. When she was tired she said to her son:

"Well, are you coming now, or later?"

"Are you goin' a'ready?" he asked, his face full of approach.

"Already? It is past four, I know."

"What are you goin' a'ready for?" he harassed.

"You needn't come if you don't want," she said.

And she went slowly away with her little girl, whilst her son stood watching her, out to the house so for her go, and yet unable to leave the widow. As she crossed the open ground in front of the Moon and Stars she heard men shouting, and sniffed the beer, and hurried a little, thinking her husband was probably in the bar.

At about half-past six her son came home, tired now, rather pale, and somewhat wretched. He was miserable, though he did not know it, because he had let her go alone. Since she had gone, he had not enjoyed his walk.

"His my dad been?" he asked.

"No," said the mother.

"He's helping to wait at the Moon and Stars. I seed him through that black tin stuff wif holes in, on the window, wif his sleeves rolled up."

"Ha!" exclaimed the mother shortly. "He's got no money. An' he'll be satisfied if he gets his 'forenoon, whether they give him more or not."

When the light was fading, and Mrs. Morris could see no more to see, she rose and went to the door. Everywhere was the sound

of excitement, the restlessness of the holiday, that at last infected her. She went out into the side garden. Women were coming home from the wales, the children dragging a white lamb with green legs, or a wooden horse. Occasionally a man lurching past, almost as full as he could carry. Sometimes a good husband came along with his family, peacefully. But usually the women and children were alone. The stay-at-home mothers used gossiping at the corners of the alley, as the twilight sank, folding their arms under their white aprons.

Miss Morel was alone, but she was used to it. Her son and her little girl slept upstairs; so, it seemed, her house was there behind her, fixed and stable. But she felt writhed with the coming child. The world seemed a dreary place, where nothing else would happen for her—at least until William grew up. But for herself, seeking but this dreary endurance—till the children grew up. And the children! She could not afford to have this third. She did not want it. The father was serving beer in a public-house, swelling himself drunk. She despised him, and was tied to him. This coming child was too much for her. If it were not for William and Annie, she was sick of it, the struggle with poverty and ugliness and monotony.

She went into the front garden, feeling too heavy to take herself out, yet unable to stay indoors. The heat suffocated her. And looking ahead, the prospect of her life made her feel as if she were buried alive.

The front garden was a small square with a privet hedge. There she stood, trying to soothe herself with the scent of flowers and the fading, beautiful evening. Opposite her small gate was the stile that led uphill, under the tall hedge, between the hurrying glow of the oat pastures. The sky overhead thickened and pulsed with light. The glow sank quickly off the fields; the earth and the hedges smothered dark. As it grew dark, a rusty glare came out on the hilltop, and out of the glare she dimly glimpsed the corner of the hill.

Sometimes, down the trough of darkness formed by the path under the hedges, men came lurching home. One young man leaped into a rut down the steep bit that ended the hill, and went with a crash into the stile. Miss Morel shuddered. He picked himself up, swearing violently, rather pathetically, as if he thought the stile had wanted to hurt him.

She went indoors, wondering if things were never going to alter. She was beginning by now to realize that they would not. She turned so far away from her girlhood, she wondered if it were the same person walking heavily up the back garden at the

Business as had run so lightly on the breakfast at five o'clock ten years before.

"What have I to do with it?" she said to herself. "What have I to do with all this? Even the child I am going to have! It doesn't seem as if I were taken into account."

Sometimes life takes hold of one, carries the body along, accomplishes one's history, and yet is not real, but leaves oneself as it were shunted over.

"I wait," Mrs. Morel said to herself—"I wait, and what I wait for can never come."

Then she straightened the kitchen, lit the lamp, mended the fire, looked out the washing for the next day, and put it to soak. After which she sat down to her sewing. Through the long hours her needle flitted regularly through the stuff. Occasionally she sighed, striving to relieve herself. And all the time she was thinking how to make the most of what she had, for the children's sakes.

At half-past eleven her husband came. His cheeks were very red and very shiny above his black moustache. His head nodded slightly. He was pleased with himself.

"Oh! Oh! waitin' for me, ha? I've bin 'olpin' Anthony, an' what's think he's got me? Nowt he's a lousy hee'f-crower, an' that's my penny—"

"He thinks you've made the rest up in here," she said shortly.

"An' I 'aven't—that I 'aven't. You b'lieve me, I've 'ad very lode this day, I have an' all." His voice went tender. "Here, an' I knowt there a bit o' brandy-cup, an' a coconut for th' children." He laid the gingerbread and the coconut, a hairy object, on the table. "Nay, she never said thank yer for noot if thy life, did she?"

As a compromise, she picked up the coconut and shook it, to see if it had any milk.

"It's a good 'un, you may back yer life o' that. I got it fra' Bill Hodgkinson. 'Bill,' I says, 'tha won't want them three men, does ta?' Arise ta for g'raht' an' me for my bit of a lad an' wench?' 'I'll hear, Walter, my lad,' 'e says: 'e's which an' 'ere we's a maid.' An' so I took one, an' thinkt 'em. I didn't like her shakin' it afore 'is eyes, but 'e says, 'Tha'd better ma's sure it's a good 'un, Walter.' An' so, for me, I knowed it was. He's a nice chap, in Bill Hodgkinson. 'e's a nice chap!"

"A man will put with anything so long as he's drunk, and you're drunk along with him," said Mrs. Morel.

"Eh, the wenchy lode 'owey, who's drunk, I th'd like ter know?" said Morel. He was extraordinarily pleased with himself, because of his day's helping to walk in the Moon and Stars. He chartered on.

Mrs. Morel, very tired, and sick of his babble, went to bed as quickly as possible, while he raised the fire.

Mrs. Morel came of a good old leather family, famous independent who had fought with Colonel Hutchinson, and who remained stout Congregationalists. Her grandfather had gone bankrupt in the lace-market at a time when so many lace-manufacturers were ruined in Nottingham. Her father, George Coppard, was an engineer—a large, hard-boned, brawny man, proud of his fair skin and blue eyes, but more proud still of his integrity. Gertrude resembled her mother in her small build. For her temper, proud and unyielding, she had from the Coppards.

George Coppard was bitterly galled by his own poverty. He became foreman of the engineers in the dockyard at Sharncliffe. Mrs. Morel—Gertrude—was the second daughter. She favoured her mother, loved her mother best of all, but she had the Coppard's clear, defiant blue eyes and their broad brow. She remembered to have hated her father's overbearing manner towards her gentle, hamsont, kindly-voiced mother. She remembered running over the breakwater at Sharncliffe and finding the boat. She remembered to have been pined and flattered by all the men when she had gone to the dockyard, for she was a delicate, rather proud child. She remembered the funny old mistress, whom assistant she had become, whom she had loved to help in the private school. And she still had the Bible that John Field had given her. She used to walk home from chapel with John Field when she was thirteen. He was the son of a well-to-do tradesman, had been to college in London, and was to devote himself to business.

She could always recall in detail a September Sunday afternoon, when they sat under the vine at the back of her father's house. The sun came through the chinks in the vine-leaves and made beautiful patterns, like a lace scarf, falling on her and on him. Some of the leaves were clear yellow, like yellow hot flowers.

"How it will," he had cried. "Now your hair, I don't know what it is like. It's as bright as copper and gold, as red as burnt copper, and it has gold threads where the sun shines on it. Fancy their saying it's brown. Your mother calls it mouse-colour."

She had met his brilliant eyes, but her clear face steadily showed the station which rose within her.

"But you say you don't like business," she pursued.

"I don't. I hate it!" he said hotly.

"And you would like to go into the military," she half-implored.

"I should. I should love it, if I thought I could make a first-rate preacher."

"Then why don't you—why don't you?" Her voice rang with defiance. "If I were a man, nothing would stop me."

She held her head erect. He was rather timid before her.

"But my father's so stiff-necked. He means to put me into the business, and I know he'll do it."

"But if you're a man?" she had cried.

"Being a man isn't everything," he replied, frowning with puzzled helplessness.

Now, as she mused about her work at the Bottoms, with some experience of what being a man meant, she knew that it was not everything.

At twenty, owing to her health, she had left Shearman. Her father had retired home to Nottingham. John Field's father had been ruined; the son had gone as a teacher in Norwood. She did not hear of him until, two years later, she made determined inquiry. He had married his landlady, a woman of forty, a widow with property.

And still Mrs. Mabel preserved John Field's Bible. She did not now believe him to be——. Well, she understood pretty well what he might or might not have been. So she preserved his Bible, and kept his memory intact in her heart, for her own sake. To her dying day, for thirty-five years, she did not speak of him.

When she was twenty-three years old, she was, at a Christmas party, a young man from the Lewisham Valley. He was then twenty-seven years old. He was well set-up, stout, and very content. He had wavy black hair that thinned again, and a vigorous black beard that had never been shaved. His cheeks were ruddy, and his red, moist mouth was noticeable because he laughed so often and so heartily. He had that rare thing, a rich, ringing laugh. Gertrude Coppard had watched him, fascinated. He was so full of colour and animation, his voice ran so easily into comic grotesquery, he was so ready and so pleasant with everybody. Her own father had a rich fund of humour, but it was satiric. This man's was different: soft, non-indifference, warm, a kind of gambolling.

She herself was opposite. She had a curious, responsive smile, which found much pleasure and amusement in listening to other folk. She was clever in leading folk on to talk. She loved ideas, and was considered very intellectual. What she lived most of all was an argument on religion or philosophy or politics with some educated man. This she did not often enjoy. So she always had people tell her about themselves, finding her pleasure so.

In her person she was rather small and delicate, with a large brow, and drooping "bushes" of brown silk curls. Her blue eyes were very straight, honest, and searching. She had the beautiful

hands of the Coppards. Her dress was always subdued. She wore dark blue silk, with a peculiar silver chain of silver webbing. This, and a heavy brooch of twisted gold, was her only ornaments. She was still perfectly honest, deeply religious, and full of beautiful qualities.

Walter Morel seemed melted away before her. She was to the miner that thing of mystery and fascination, a lady. When she spoke to him, it was with a southern pronunciation and a purity of English which thrilled him to hear. She watched him. He danced well, as if it were natural and joyous in him to dance. His grandfather was a French refugee who had married an English housemaid—if it had been a marriage. Gertrude Coppard watched the young miner as he danced a certain subtle evolution like glimmer in his movement, and his face the flower of his body, ruddy, with rumpled black hair, and laughing like whatever partner he bowed above. She thought him rather wonderful, never having met anyone like him. Her father was to her the type of all men. And George Coppard, great in his bearing, handsome, and rather fierce; who professed theology in reading, and who drew near in sympathy only to one man, the Apostle Paul; who was harsh in gesture, and in familiarity ironic; who ignored all sensual pleasures—he was very different from the miners. Gertrude herself was rather contemptuous of dancing; she had not the slightest inclination towards that accomplishment, and had never learned even a *Roger de Coverley*. She was a puritan, like her father, high-minded, and really stern. Therefore the dusky, golden softness of this man's sensual flame of life, that flowed off his flesh like the flame from a candle, not baffled and gripped into incandescence by thought and spirit as her life was, seemed to her something wonderful, beyond her.

He came and bowed above her. A warmth radiated through her as if she had drunk wine.

"Here he comes and bows this one up me," he said caressively.

"I'm sure, you know. I'm going to see you dance."

She had told him before she could not dance. She glanced at his humility and smiled. Her smile was very beautiful. It moved the man so that he forgot everything.

"No, I won't dance," she said softly. Her words came clear and ringing.

She knowing what he was doing—he often did the right thing by instinct—he sat beside her, looking serenely.

"But you mustn't make your dance," she reproved.

"Nay, I don't want to dance that—it's not me as I care about."

"Yet you invited me to it."

EARLY MARRIED LIFE OF THE MODEL

He laughed very heartily at this.

"I never thought o' that. Tha'tt not long in taking the rest o' us."

It was her turn to laugh quickly.

"You don't look as if you'd come much benefited," she said.

"Yes like a pig's tail, I not because I can't help it," he laughed, rather solemnly.

"And you are a miser!" she exclaimed in surprise.

"Yes. I went down when I was ten."

She looked at him in wondering dismay.

"When you were ten! And wasn't it very hard?" she asked.

"You soon get used to it. You live like th' mice, an' you pop out at night to see what's going on."

"It makes me feel blind," she frowned.

"Like a moudle-warp!" he laughed. "Yi, an' there's some things as does go round like moudle-warps." He thrust his face forward in the blind, snout-like way of a mole, seeming to sniff and paw for himself. "They does thought" he pronounced solemnly. "The other need such a way they got in. But the man be out ta's then down some time, an' the can see for thosen."

She looked at him, startled. This was a new aspect of life suddenly opened before her. She realized the life of the miners, hundreds of them toiling below earth and coming up at evening. He seemed to her naïve. He lived his life daily, and with gaiety. She looked at him, with a touch of appeal in her part humility.

"Shouldn't we like it?" he asked seriously. "Appears not, it 'ad dirty that."

She had never been "tho'd" and "tho'd" before.

The next Christmas they were married, and for three months she was perfectly happy: for six months she was very happy.

He had signed the pledge, and wore the blue ribbon of a teetotaler: he was nothing if not showy. They lived, she thought, in his own house. It was small, but convenient enough, and quite nicely furnished, with solid, worthy stuff that suited her honest soul. The women, her neighbours, were rather foreign to her, and Minnie's mother and sisters were apt to sneer at her ladylike ways. But she could perfectly well live by herself, so long as she had her husband close.

Sometimes, when she herself wearied of love-talk, she tried to open her heart seriously to him. She saw him listen defensively, but without understanding. This killed her efforts at a finer intimacy, and she had flashes of fear. Sometimes he was careless of an evening: it was not enough for him just to be near her, she realized. She was glad when he set himself to little jobs.

HOME AND LOVERS

He was a remarkably handy man—could make or mend anything. So she would say:

"I do like that coal-scoke of your mother's—it is small and rusty."

"Doesn't, my wench? Well, I made that, so I can make these too."

"What? why, isn't a steel one?"

"An' what if it is! The s't he's one very similar, if not exactly same."

She did not mind the men, nor the hammering and noise. He was busy and happy.

But in the seventh month, when she was brooding his Sunday coat, she felt papers in the breast-pocket, and, seized with a sudden curiosity, took them out to read. He very rarely wore the frock-coat he was married in; and it had not occurred to her before to feel curious concerning the papers. They were the bills of the household furniture, still unpaid.

"Look here," she said at night, after he was washed and had had his dinner. "I found these in the pocket of your wedding-coat. Haven't you settled the bills yet?"

"No. I haven't had a chance."

"But you told me all was paid. I had better go into Birmingham on Saturday and settle them. I don't like sitting on another man's chairs and eating from an unpaid table."

He did not answer.

"I can have your best-book, can't I?"

"That can he's it, for what good it'll be to thee."

"I thought——" she began. He had told her he had a good bit of money left over. But she realized it was no use asking questions. She sat rigid with bitterness and indignation.

The next day she went down to see his mother.

"Didn't you buy the furniture for Walter?" she asked.

"Yes, I did," tartly retorted the older woman.

"And how much did he give you to pay for it?"

The older woman was stung with fine indignation.

"Eighty pounds, if you're so keen on knowin'," she replied.

"Eighty pounds! But there are fifty-two pounds still owing!"

"I can't help that."

"But where has it all gone?"

"You'd find all the papers, I think, if you look—beside me, pound as he owed me, an' six pound as the wedding cost down here."

"Six pounds!" echoed Gertrude Morel. It seemed to her monstrous that, after her own father had paid so heavily for her

EARLY MARRIED LIFE OF THE MORDS

wedding, six pounds more should have been squandered in eating and drinking at Walter's parents' house, at his expense.

"And how much has he sunk in his house?" she asked.

"His house—which house?"

Gertrude Mord went white to the lips. He had told her the house he lived in, and she was now, was his own.

"I thought the house we live in——" she began.

"They're my house, these two," said the mother-in-law. "And not clear either. It's as much as I can do to keep the mortgage interest paid."

Gertrude sat white and silent. She was her father now.

"Then we ought to be paying you rent," she said coldly.

"Walter is paying me rent," replied the mother.

"And what rent?" asked Gertrude.

"Six-and-six a week," retorted the mother.

It was more than the house was worth. Gertrude held her head erect, looked straight before her.

"It is lucky to be you," said the older woman, bitterly, "to have a husband as takes all the worry of the money, and leaves you a free hand."

The young wife was silent.

She said very little to her husband, but her manner had changed towards him. Something in her proud, homeside soul had crystallised out hard as rock.

When October came in, she thought only of Christmas. Two years ago, at Christmas, she had met him. Last Christmas she had married him. This Christmas she would bear him a child.

"You don't dance yourself, do you, miss?" asked her nearest neighbour, in October, when there was great talk of opening a dancing-club over the Brick and Tile Inn at Bowwood.

"Never! never had the least inclination to," Mrs. Mord replied.

"Fancy! As' how funny as you should be' married your Master. You know he's quite a famous one for dancing."

"I didn't know he was famous," laughed Mrs. Mord.

"Yes, he is though! Why, he ran that dancing-club in the Miller's Arms club-room for over five year."

"Did he?"

"Yes, he did." The other woman was defiant. "As' it was changed every Tuesday, and Thursday, an' Sa'day—as' there was carry'n-on, scortin' in all seasons."

This kind of thing was gall and bitterness to Mrs. Mord, and she had a fair share of it. The women did not spare her, at first, for she was superior, though she could not help it.

He began to be rather late in coming home.

"They're working very late now, aren't they?" she said to her mother-in-law.

"No later than they often do, I don't think. But they may be having their pint at Ellen's, an' they get rather", an' there you and Dinner soon cold—an' it serves 'em right."

"But Mr. Morel does not take any drink."

The woman dropped the cloth, looked at Mrs. Morel, then went on with her work, saying nothing.

Gertrude Morel was very ill when the boy was born. Morel was good to her, as good as gold. But she felt very lonely, miles away from her own people. She felt lonely with him now, and his presence only made it more intense.

The boy was small and frail at first, but he came on quickly. He was a beautiful child, with dark gold ringlets, and dark-blue eyes which changed gradually to a clear grey. His mother loved him passionately. He came just when her own bitterness of disillusion was hardest to bear; when her faith in life was shaken, and her soul felt desolate and lonely. She made much of the child, and the father was jealous.

At last Mrs. Morel despised her husband. She turned to the child; she turned from the father. He had begun to neglect her; the morality of his own home was gone. He had no gift, she said bitterly to herself. What he felt just at the moment, that was all to him. He could not stand by anything. There was nothing at the back of all his show.

There began a battle between the husband and wife—a fearful, bloody battle that ended only with the death of one. She fought to make him undertake his own responsibilities, to make him fulfil his obligations. But he was too different from her. His nature was purely sensual, and she strove to make him moral, religious. She tried to force him to face things. He could not endure; he drove her out of his mind.

While the baby was still tiny, the father's temper had become so irritable that it was not to be trusted. The child had only to give a little trouble when the man began to bully. A little more, and the hard hands of the collar hit the baby. Then Mrs. Morel looked her husband, loathed him for days; and he went out and drank; and she cared very little what he did. Only, on his return, she watched him with her sister.

The mismanagement between them caused him, knowingly or unknowingly, greatly to offend her where he would not have done.

William was only one year old, and his mother was proud of him, he was so pretty. She was not well off now, but her share

kept the boy in clothes. Then, with his little white hair curled with an ostrich feather, and his white coat, he was a joy to her, the twisting rings of hair clustering round his head. Mrs. Morel lay flinging, one Sunday morning, to the shelter of the father and child themselves. Then she died off. When she came downstairs, a great fire glowed in the grate, the room was hot, the breakfast was roughly laid, and seated in his armchair, against the chimney-place, sat Morel, rather timid; and standing between his legs, the child—cuddled like a sheep, with such an odd round poit—looking wondering at her; and on a newspaper spread out upon the hearthrug, a myriad of uneven-shaped curls, like the petals of a pansy, glared in the reddening firelight.

Mrs. Morel stood still. It was her first baby. She went very white, and was unable to speak.

"What dost think o' me?" Morel laughed uneasily.

She gripped her two fists, tilted them, and came forward. Morel shrunk back.

"I could kill you, I could!" she said. She choked with rage, her two fists uplifted.

"Yer ain't want ter make a wench o' 'im," Morel said, in a frightened tone, bending his head to shield his eyes from her. His attempt at laughter had vanished.

The mother looked down at the jagged, close-clipped head of her child. She put her hands on his hair, and stroked and stroked his head.

"Oh—my boy!" she faltered. Her lip trembled, her face broke, and, reaching up the child, she buried her face in his shoulder and wept painfully. She was one of those women who cannot cry; when it hurts as it hurts a man. It was like ripping something out of her, her sobbing.

Morel sat with his elbows on his knees, his hands gripped together till the knuckles were white. He gazed in the fire, feeling almost stunned, as if he could not breathe.

Presently she came to an end, soothed the child and cleared away the breakfast-table. She left the newspaper, littered with curls, spread upon the hearthrug. At last her husband gathered it up and put it at the back of the fire. She went about her work with closed mouth and very quiet. Morel was satisfied. He crept about wretchedly, and his meals were a misery that day. She spoke to him civilly, and never alluded to what he had done. But he felt something final had happened.

Afterwards she told she had been silly, that the boy's hair would have had to be cut, sooner or later. In the end, she even brought herself to say to her husband it was just as well he had played

latter when he did. But she knew, and Mord knew, that that act had caused something momentous to take place in her soul. She remembered the scene all her life, as one in which she had suffered the most intensely.

This act of uncalculated dramatics was the spine through the side of her love for Mord. Before, while she had striven against him himself, she had fought after him, as if he had gone away from her. Now she ceased to fight for his love; he was an outsider to her. This made life much more bearable.

Nevertheless, she still continued to strive with him. She still had her high moral sense, inherited from generations of Puritans. It was now a religious instinct, and she was almost a fanatic with him, because she loved him, or had loved him. If he sinned, she remonstrated him. If he drank, and lied, was often a potterer, sometimes a knave, she wielded the lash unmercifully.

The pity was, she was too much his opposite. She could not be sincere with the little he might be; she would have him the worst that he ought to be. So, in seeking to make him nobler than he could be, she destroyed him. She injured and hurt and starved herself, but she lost none of her worth. She also had the children.

He drank rather heavily, though not more than many sailors, and always beer, so that whilst his health was affected, it was never injured. The weak-and was his chief disease. He sat in the Museum Avenue until twinging-out time every Friday, every Saturday, and every Sunday evening. On Monday and Tuesday he had to get up and reluctantly leave towards ten o'clock. Sometimes he stayed at home on Wednesday and Thursday evenings, or was only out for an hour. He practically never had to make work owing to his drinking.

But although he was very steady at work, his wages fell off. He was blab-mouthed, a tongue-wagger. Authority was hateful to him, therefore he could only about the ph-managers. He would say, to the Palmetum:

"Th' gaffer come down to our staff this morning, an' 'e says, 'You know, Walter, this 'ere'll not do. What about these peeps?' An' I says to him, 'Why, what are talkin' about? What d'it mean about th' peeps?' 'It'll never do, this 'ere,' 'e says. 'You'll be hakin' th' roof in, one o' these days.' An' I says, 'That'd better wait' on a bit o' chance, then, an' hold it up wif der 'ead.' So 'e was shut read, to control an' 'e swore, an' 'other things they did laugh." Mord was a good mimic. He imitated the manager's fat, squandy voice, with his attempt at good English.

"'I shan't have it, Walter. Who knows more about it, me or

you?' So I says, 'I've never but not how much that' know, Alfred, it'll 'appen carry them ter 'ead an' back.' "

So Mabel would go on in the amusement of his boon-companions. And some of this would be true. The pit-manager was not an educated man. He had been a boy along with Mabel, so that, while the two differed each other, they more or less took each other by the ground. But Alfred Charlesworth did not forgive the huffy tone public-house sayings. Consequently, although Mabel was a good mixer, sometimes earning as much as five pounds a week when he married, he came gradually to have worse and worse stalls, where the coal was thin, and hard to get, and uneconomical.

Also, in summer, the pits are slack. Often, on bright sunny mornings, the men are seen trooping home again at ten, eleven, or twelve o'clock. No empty trucks stand at the pit-mouth. The women on the hillside look across as they strike the heavinging against the fence, and count the ruggies the engine is taking along the line up the valley. And the children, as they come from school at dinner-time, looking down the fields and seeing the wheels on the headstocks standing, say:

"Minnor's knocked off. My dad'll be at home."

And there is a just of thiding over all, women and children and men, because money will be short at the end of the week.

Mabel was supposed to give his wife thirty shillings a week, to provide everything—rent, food, clothes, clubs, luxuries, doctors. Occasionally, if he were flush, he gave her thirty-five. But these occasions by no means balanced those when he gave her twenty-five. In winter, with a decent stall, the mine might earn fifty or fifty-five shillings a week. Then he was happy. On Friday night, Saturday, and Sunday, he spent royally, getting rid of his coverings or furnishings. And out of so much, he scarcely spared the children an extra penny or bought them a pound of apples. It all went in drink. In the bad times, matters were more worrying, but he was not so often drunk, so that Mrs. Mabel used to say:

"I'm not sure I wouldn't rather be short, for when he's flush, there isn't a minute of peace."

If he earned forty shillings he kept ten; from thirty-five he kept five; from thirty-two he kept three; from twenty-eight he kept three; from twenty-four he kept two; from twenty he kept one-and-six; from eighteen he kept a shilling; from sixteen he kept sixpence. He never saved a penny, and he gave his wife no opportunity of saving; indeed, she had occasionally to pay his debts; not public-house debts, for those never were passed on to the women, but debts when he had bought a canary, or a fancy walking-stick.

At the waking time, Marcel was working badly, and Mrs. Marcel was trying to ease against her confinement. So it galled her bitterly to think he should be out taking his pleasure and spending money, whilst she remained at home, harassed. There were two days holiday. On the Tuesday morning Marcel rose early. He was in good spirits. Quite early, before six o'clock, she heard him whistling away to himself downstairs. He had a pleasant way of whistling, lively and musical. He nearly always whistled hymns. He had been a choir-boy with a beautiful voice, and had taken solos in Southwell Cathedral. His morning whistling alone betrayed him.

His wife lay listening to him tinkering away in the garden, his whistling ringing out as he stowed and hammered away. It always gave her a sense of warmth and peace to hear him thus as she lay in bed, the children not yet awake, in the bright early morning, happy in his man's fashion.

At nine o'clock, while the children with bare legs and feet were sitting playing on the sofa, and the mother was washing up, he came in from his carpentry, his sleeves rolled up, his waistcoat hanging open. He was still a good-looking man, with black, wavy hair, and a large black moustache. His face was perhaps too much inflamed, and there was about him a look almost of perverseness. But now he was jolly. He went straight to the sink where his wife was washing up.

"What are these there?" he said boisterously. "Shake 'em off an' let me wash myself."

"You may wait till I've finished," said his wife.

"Oh, come! An' what if I should?"

This good-humoured threat angered Mrs. Marcel.

"Then you can go and wash yourself in the soft-water tub."

"But I can an' a', the mucky little 'unsy."

With which he stood watching her a moment, then went away to wait for her.

When he thought he could still make himself again a real gallant. Usually he preferred to go out with a scarf round his neck. Now, however, he made a toilet. There seemed so much gaiety in the way he pulled and wrilled as he washed himself, so much elasticity with which he hurried to the mirror in the kitchen, and, braving because it was too low for him, strupulously patted his wet black hair, that it irritated Mrs. Marcel. He put on a turn-down collar, a black bow, and wore his Sunday tail-coat. As usual, he looked square, and what his clothes would not do, his features for making the most of his good looks would.

At half-past nine Jerry Purdy came to call for his pal. Jerry

was Moral's bosom friend, and Mrs. Moral disliked him. He was a tall, thin man, with a rather long face, the kind of face that means an lack of sympathy. He walked with a stiff, haughty dignity, as if his head were on a wooden spring. His nature was cold and shrewd. Generous where he intended to be generous, he seemed to be very fond of Moral, and more or less to take charge of him.

Mrs. Moral hated Mrs. She had known his wife, who had died of consumption, and who had, at the end, received such a violent shock of her husband, that if he came into her room it caused her hemorrhage. None of which Jerry had seemed to mind. And now his eldest daughter, a girl of fifteen, kept a poor house for him, and looked after the two younger children.

"A mean, winter-hearted rick!" Mrs. Moral said of Mrs.

"I've never known Jerry mean in my life," protested Moral.

"A spite-headed and more spite than you couldn't find anywhere, according to my knowledge."

"Optim-headed to you," retorted Mrs. Moral. "But his face is shut tight enough to his children, poor things."

"Poor things! And what for are they poor things, I should like to know."

But Mrs. Moral would not be appeased as Jerry's sons.

The subject of argument was soon, crossing his thin neck over the wallaby curtain. He caught Mrs. Moral's eye.

"Moral's, what's Moral in?"

"Yes—he is."

Jerry entered unasked, and stood by the kitchen doorway. He was not inclined to sit down, but stood there, coolly asserting the rights of men and husbands.

"A nice day," he said to Mrs. Moral.

"Yes."

"Grand out this morning—grand for a walk."

"Do you mean you're going for a walk?" she asked.

"Yes. We mean walkin' to Nottingham," he replied.

"H'm!"

The two men gazed each other, both glad: Jerry, however, full of assurance, Moral rather awkward, afraid to mean too familiar in presence of his wife. But he heard his boots quickly, with spirit. They were going for a ten-mile walk across the fields to Nottingham. Climbing the hillside from the Bottoms, they mounted gaily into the morning. At the Blown and Starn they had their first drink, then on to the Old Spot. Then a long five miles of drought is every three men-Bulwell to a glorious pint of beer. But they stayed in a field with some hawthorn whose gallon bottle was full, so that, when they came to sight of the city, Moral was sleepy.

SONS AND LOVERS

The town spread upwards before them, smoking vaguely in the misty glare, reaching the coast away to the south with spires and factory smoke and chimneys. In the last field Moral lay down under an ash-tree and slept soundly for over an hour. When he rose to go forward he felt queer.

The two had dinner in the Meadows, with Jerry's sister, then repaired to the Punch Bowl, where they sat in the restaurant of pigeon-feeding. Moral never in his life played cards, considering them as having some occult, malevolent power—"the devil's pictures," he called them! But he was a master of shilder and of dominoes. He took a challenge from a Newark man, an shilder. All the men in the old, long bar took sides, betting either one way or the other. Moral took off his coat. Jerry held the hat containing the money. The men at the tables watched. Some stood with their snags in their hands. Moral felt his big wooden ball carefully, then launched it. He played havoc among the nine-pins, and won half a crown, which restored him to sobriety.

By seven o'clock the two were in good condition. They caught the 7.35 train home.

In the afternoon the Bottoms was intolerable. Every inhabitant remaining was out of doors. The women, in twos and threes, bareheaded and in white aprons, grouped in the alley between the blocks. Men, having a rest between drinks, sat on their heels and talked. The place smelt stale; the slate roofs glistened in the wet haze.

Miss Moral took the little girl down to the brook in the meadows, which were not more than two hundred yards away. The water ran quickly over stones and broken pots. Mother and child leaned on the rail of the old sheep-bridge, watching. Up at the dipping-hole, at the other end of the meadow, Miss Moral could see the naked forms of boys flashing round the deep yellow water, or an occasional bright figure dart glimmering over the blackish magnet meadows. She knew William was at the dipping-hole, and it was the dread of her life lest he should get drowned. Annie played under the tall old hedge, picking up elder cones, that she called cressets. The child required much attention, and the flies were teasing.

The children were put to bed at seven o'clock. Then she washed awhile.

When Walter Moral and Jerry arrived at Bathwood they felt a load off their minds; a railway journey no longer imposed, so they could put the finishing touches to a glorious day. They smugged the Nelson with the satisfaction of returned travellers.

The next day was a work-day, and the thought of it put a

dumper on the men's spirits. Most of them, moreover, had spent their money. Some were already rolling drowsily home, or deep in prepositional for the minutes. Mrs. Morel, listening to their mournful singing, went indoors. Nine o'clock passed, and ten, and still "the pair" had not returned. On a doorstep somewhere a man was singing loudly, in a drunk, "Land, kindly Light." Mrs. Morel was always indignant with the drunken men that they must sing that hymn when they get muddled.

"As if 'Genevieve' weren't good enough," she said.

The kitchen was full of the scent of boiled hams and hogs. On the hob a large black saucepan simmered slowly. Mrs. Morel took a pasteboard, a great bowl of thick red earth, smeared a heap of white sugar into the bottom, and then, stinking herself to the wicks, was pouring in the liquor.

Just then Morel came in. He had been very jolly in the Nelson, but coming home had grown irritable. He had not quite got over the feeling of irritability and pain, after having steps on the ground when he was so hot; and a bad headache afflicted him as he entered the house. He did not know he was angry. But when the garden-gate resisted his attempts to open it, he kicked it and broke the lock. He entered just as Mrs. Morel was pouring the infusion of herbs out of the saucepan. Sniffing slightly, he lurched against the table. The boiling liquor pitched. Mrs. Morel started back.

"Good gracious," she cried, "coming home in his drunkenness!"

"Comin' home in his what?" he started, his hat over his eye. Suddenly her blood rose in a jet.

"Say you're not drunk!" she flushed.

She had put down her saucepan, and was stirring the sugar into the beer. He dropped his two hands heavily on the table, and thrust his face forward at her.

"Say you're not drunk," he repeated. "Why, nobody but a nasty little black like you 'ud 'ave such a thought!" He thrust his face forward at her.

"There's money to beak with, if there's money for nothing else."

"I've not spent a twopenny!" he said this day," he said.

"You don't get so drunk as a lord on nothing," she replied.

"And," she cried, flushing into sudden fury, "if you've been sponging on your beloved Jerry, why, let him look after his children, for they need it."

"It's a lie, it's a lie. Shut your face, woman."

They were now at hand-to-hand. Each forgot everything save

the hatred of each other and the battle between them. She was fiery and daring as he. They went on till he called her a liar.

"No," she cried, starting up, scarce able to breathe. "Don't call me that—you, the most despicable liar that ever walked in show-leather!" She thrust the last words out of suffocated lungs.

"You're a liar!" he yelled, banging the table with his fist. "You're a liar, you're a liar."

She stifled herself, with clenched fist.

"The house is filthy with you," she cried.

"Then get out on it—*it's mine*. Get out on it!" he shouted. "It's not as things do' money whom, not *that*. It's my house, not *that*. Then get out on't—get out on't!"

"And I would," she cried, suddenly shaken here stark of impudence. "Ah, wouldn't I, wouldn't I have gone long ago, but for those children. Ay, haven't I repeated not going years ago, when I'd only the one"—suddenly dying into rage. "Do you think it's for you I stop—do you think I'd stop one minute for me?"

"Go, then," he shouted, beside himself. "Go!"

"No!" the faced sound. "No," she cried loudly, "you don't have it all your own way; you don't do all you like. I've got those children to see to. My word," she laughed, "I should look well to have things to you."

"Go," he cried thickly, liking his fist. He was afraid of her. "Go!"

"I should be only too glad. I should laugh, laugh, my lord, if I could get away from you," she replied.

He came up to her, his red face, with its blackish eyes, thrust forward, and gripped her arms. She cried in fear of him, struggled to be free. Glaring slightly at himself, panting, he pushed her roughly to the water door, and thrust her forth, closing the bolt behind her with a bang. Then he went back into the kitchen, dropped into his armchair, his head, bursting full of blood, sinking between his knees. Thus he dipped gradually into a stupor, from exhaustion and intoxication.

The moon was high and magnificent in the August night. Mrs. Morel, seared with passion, shivered to find herself out there in a great white light, that fell cold on her, and gave a shock to her inflamed soul. She stood for a few moments helplessly staring at the glowering great chamberlains near the door. Then she got the air into her house. She walked down the garden path, trembling in every limb, while the child walked with her. For a while she could not control her consciousness, mechanically the

went over the hot stone, then over it again, certain phrases, certain memories coming each time like a brand red-hot down on her soul; and each time she shouted again the pain went, each time the brand came down at the same place, till the mark was burnt in, and the pain burnt out, and so left the quest to herself. She must have been half an hour in this delicious condition. Then the pressure of the night came again to her. She glanced round in fear. She had wandered to the side garden, where she was walking up and down the path beside the current bushes under the long wall. The garden was a narrow strip, bounded from the road, that cut transversely between the blocks, by a thick thorn hedge.

She hurried out of the side garden to the front, where she could stand as if in an immense gulf of white light, the moon streaming high in front of her, the moonlight streaming up from the hills in front, and filling the valley where the flowers crunched, almost bloodlessly. There, panting and half weeping in reaction from the stress, she murmured to herself over and over again: "The release! the release!"

She became aware of something about her. With an effort she raised herself to see what it was that penetrated her consciousness. The tall white hills were rocking in the moonlight, and the air was charged with their perfume, as with a presence. Mrs. Morel gasped slightly in fear. She scented the big, gulfed flowers on their peaks, then shivered. They seemed to be stretching in the moonlight. She put her hand into one white bin: the gold quietly shivered on her fingers by moonlight. She bent down to look at the binful of yellow poppies; but it only appeared dusky. Then she drank a deep draught of the scent. It almost made her dizzy.

Mrs. Morel leaned on the garden gate, looking out, and she hurt herself awhile. She did not know what she thought. Except for a slight feeling of sickness, and her consciousness in the child, herself asked not like scent into the dizzy, pale air. After a time the child, too, refound with her in the sinking-pot of moonlight, and she turned with the hills and hills and houses, all turned together in a kind of vision.

When she came to herself she was tired for sleep. Languidly she looked about her; she thought all white glows seemed like bushes spread with linen; a moth ricocheted over them, and right across the garden. Following it with her eye roused her. A few whiffs of the rose, strong scent of phlox incriminated her. She passed along the path, halting at the white rose-bush. It smelled sweet and simple. She touched the white ruffles of the rose. Their flesh was cool, soft leaves reminded her of the moonlight and

sanctity. She was very fond of them. But she was tired, and wanted to sleep. In the mysterious out-of-doors she felt forsaken.

There was no noise anywhere. Evidently the children had not been wakened, or had gone to sleep again. A train, three miles away, roared across the valley. The night was very large, and very strange, stretching its heavy distances infinitely. And out of the silver-grey fog of darkness came sounds vague and hoarse: a creak like not far off, sound of a train like a sigh, and distant shouts of men.

Her quivering heart beginning to beat quickly again, she hurried down the side garden to the back of the house. Softly she lifted the latch: the door was still bolted, shut hard against her. She tapped gently, waited, then tapped again. She must not wake the children, nor the neighbours. He must be asleep, and he would not wake easily. Her heart began to burn to be indoors. She clung to the door-handle. Now it was cold; she would take a chill, and in her present condition!

Pushing her apron over her head and her arms, she hurried again to the side garden, to the window of the kitchen. Leaning on the sill, she could just see, under the blind, her husband's arms spread out on the table, and his black head on the board. He was sleeping with his face lying on the table. Something in his attitude made her feel kind of things. The lamp was burning steadily; she could tell by the copper colour of the light. She tapped at the window more and more restlessly. Almost it seemed as if the glass would break. Still he did not wake up.

After vain efforts, she began to shiver, partly from contact with the stone, and from exhaustion. Fearful always for the unborn child, she wondered what she could do for warmth. She went down to the wash-house, where was an old hearthstone she had carried out for the rag-cart the day before. This she wrapped over her shoulders. It was warm, if grimy. Then she walked up and down the garden path, popping every now and then under the blind, knocking, and telling herself that in the end the very staid of his position must wake him.

At last, after about an hour, she rapped long and low at the window. Gradually the sound penetrated to him. When, in despair, she had ceased to tap, she saw him stir, then lift his face blindly. The labouring of his heart hurt him into consciousness. She rapped impetuously at the window. He started awake. Instantly she saw his face set and his eyes glare. He had not a grain of physical fear. If it had been twenty burglars, he would have gone blindly for them. He glared round, bewildered, but prepared to fight.

"Open the door, Walter," she said coldly.

His hands relaxed. It dawned on him, what he had done. His head dropped, rolled and dropped. She saw him hurry to the door, heard the bolt click. He slid the latch. It opened—and there stood the allegorical night, fearful to him, after the sunny light of the lamp. He hurried back.

When Miss Moral awoke, she saw him almost running through the door to the stairs. He had ripped his collar off his neck in his haste to be gone as she came in, and there it lay with hurried buttonholes. It made her angry.

She warmed and washed herself. In her weariness disposing everything, she moved about as the little table that remained to be done, at his breakfast, rinsed his pit-bottle, put his pit-clothes on the hearth to warm, set his pit-boots beside them, put him out a clean scarf and snap-bag and two apples, raised the fire, and went to bed. He was already dead asleep. His narrow black eyebrows were drawn up in a sort of prehistoric anxiety into his forehead, while his cheeks' discomposure, and his sulky mouth, seemed to be saying: "I don't care who you are nor what you are, I shall have my own way."

Miss Moral knew him too well to look at him. As she unfolded her bedclothes at the mirror, she walked faintly to see her face all smudged with yellow dust of him. She brushed it off, and at her lay-downs. For some time her mind continued snapping and jingling sparsely, but she was asleep before her husband woke from the first sleep of his despatchment.

The Birth of Paul, and another Battle

AFTER such a scene as the last, Walter Morel was for some days *à l'air* and ashamed, but he soon regained his old brotherly indifference. Yet there was a slight shrinking, a diminishing in his assurance. Physically even, he shrank, and his fine full presence waned. He never grew to the same stout, so that, as he sank from his exert, sensitive hearing, his physique seemed to contract along with his pride and moral strength.

But now he realized how hard it was for his wife to drag about on her work, and, his sympathy quickened by penitence, hastened forward with his help. He came straight home from the pit, and stayed in at evening till Friday, and then he could not remain at home. But he was back again by ten o'clock, almost quite sober.

He always made his own breakfast. Being a man who rose early and had plenty of time he did not, as some miners do, drag his wife out of bed at six o'clock. At five, sometimes earlier, he woke, got straight out of bed, and went downstairs. When she could not sleep, his wife lay waiting for this time, as for a period of peace. The only real rest seemed to be when he was out of the house.

He went downstairs in his shirt and then struggled into his pajamas, which were left on the hearth to warm all night. There was always a fire, because Mrs. Morel smoked. And the first sound in the house was the long, bang of the poker against the rails, as Morel attacked the remainder of the coal to make the hearth, which was filled and left on the hob, finally boil. His cup and knife and fork, all he wanted except just the food, was laid ready on the table on a newspaper. Then he got his breakfast, made the tea, packed the bottom of the stove with eggs so that out the draught, piled a big fire, and sat down to an hour of joy. He rested his back on a fork and caught the drops of fat as his breath; then he put the kettle on his thick rim of wood, and cut off shanks with a sharp-knife, poured his tea into his saucer, and was happy. With his family about, meals were never so pleasant. He finished a fork; it is a modern introduction which he still scarcely reached common people. What Morel preferred was a *champagne*. Then, in solitude, he ate and drank, often dining, in

cold weather, on a fine wood with his back to the warm chimney-place, his food on the fender, his cup on the hearth. And then he read the last night's newspaper—what all it he could—spelling it over laboriously. He preferred to keep the blinds down and the candles lit even when it was daylight; it was the habit of the mine.

At a quarter to six he rose, cut two thick slices of bread and butter, and put them in the white calico nap-bag. He filled his tin bottle with tea. Cold tea without milk or sugar was the drink he preferred for the pit. Then he pulled off his shirt, and put on his singlet, a vest of thick flannel cut low round the neck, and with short sleeves like a chemise.

Then he went upstairs to his wife with a cup of tea because she was ill, and because it occurred to him.

"I've brought thee a cup o' tea, lass," he said.

"Nith, you needn't, for you know I don't like it," she replied.

"Drink it up; it'll pop thee off to sleep again."

She sipped the tea. It pleased him to see her take it and sip it.

"I'll back my life there's no sugar in," she said.

"Yi—there's none big us," he replied, injured.

"It's a wonder," she said, sipping again.

She had a winsome face when her hair was loose. He loved her to grumble at him in this manner. He looked at her again, and went, without any sort of leave-taking. He never took more than one slice of bread and butter to eat in the pit, so an apple or an orange was a treat to him. He always liked it when she put one out for him. He tied a scarf round his neck, put on his great, heavy boots, his coat, with the big pockets, that carried his nap-bag and his bottle of tea, and went forth into the fresh morning air, closing, without locking, the door behind him. He loved the early morning, and the walk across the fields. So he appeared at the pit-top, often with a walk from the hedge between his rooms, which he showed all day to keep his mouth moist, down the mine, feeling quite so happy as when he was in the field.

Later, when the time for the baby grew nearer, he would hustle round in his shabby frock, peeing out the ashes, rubbing the fireplace, sweeping the hearth before he went to work. Then, feeling self-sufficient, he went upstairs.

"Now I've cleared up for thee; that's no 'tation to see a peg all dry, but six and read dry boots."

Which made her laugh, in spite of her indignation.

"And the dinner cooks itself?" she answered.

"Eh, I know naught about it!"

"You'd know if there weren't any."

"Ay, 'appen so," he answered, departing.

When she got downstairs, she would find the house tidy, but dirty. She could not rest until she had thoroughly cleaned; so she went down to the sub-pit with her *dan-pur*. Mrs. Kirk, seeing her, would contrive to have to go to her own seat-place at that minute. Then, across the wooden fence, she would call:

"So you keep sweeping on, then?"

"Ay," answered Mrs. Marel deprecatingly. "There's nothing else for it."

"Have you seen Floss?" called a very small woman from across the road. It was Mrs. Anthony, a black-haired, strange little body, who always wore a brown velvet dress, tight fitting.

"I haven't," said Mrs. Marel.

"Eh, I wish he'd come. I've got a copperful of clothes, an' I've seen I heerd his bell."

"Flark! He's at the end."

The two women looked down the alley. At the end of the *Beccana* a man stood in a sort of old-fashioned trap, bending over barrels of remanufactured stuff; while a cluster of women held up their arms to him, some with bundles. Mrs. Anthony herself had a heap of creamy, washed stockings hanging over her arm.

"I've done ten dozen this week," she said proudly to Mrs. Marel.

"True!" went the other. "I don't know how you can find time."

"Eh!" said Mrs. Anthony. "You can find time if you make time."

"I don't know how you do it," said Mrs. Marel. "And how much shall you get for those many?"

"Tuppence-ha'penny a dozen," replied the other.

"Well," said Mrs. Marel, "I'd scarce believe I'd sh down and save twenty-four stockings for twopence ha'penny."

"Oh, I don't know," said Mrs. Anthony. "You can rip along with 'em."

Rise was coming along, ringing his bell. Women were waiting at the yard-ends with their stained stockings hanging over their arms. The man, a comely fellow, made jokes with them, tried to-reddle them, and bullied them. Mrs. Marel went up her yard *disdainfully*.

It was an understood thing that if one woman wanted her neighbour, she should put the poker in the fire and hang at the back of the fireplace, which, as the fire were back to back, would make a great niche in the adjoining house. One morning Mrs. Kirk, mixing a pudding, nearly started out of her side as she heard the thud, thud, in her grate. With her hands all floury, she rushed in to the front.

"Did you knock, Mrs. Marel?"

"If you wouldn't mind, Mrs. Kirk."

Mrs. Kirk climbed on to her copper, got over the wall on to Mrs. Morel's copper, and ran in to her neighbour.

"Oh, dear, how are you feeling?" she cried in concern.

"You might knock Mrs. Bower," said Mrs. Morel.

Mrs. Kirk went into the yard, lifted up her strong, shrill voice, and called:

"Ag-gie—Ag-gie!"

The sound was heard from one end of the Bottoms to the other. At last Aggie came running up, and was sent for Mrs. Bower, while Mrs. Kirk left her pudding and stayed with her neighbour.

Mrs. Morel went to bed. Mrs. Kirk had Anne and William for dinner. Mrs. Bower, fat and well-dressed, bowed the house.

"Black some cold meat up for the master's dinner, and make him an apple-charlotte pudding," said Mrs. Morel.

"He may go without pudding this day," said Mrs. Bower.

Morel was not as a rule one of the first to appear at the bottom of the pit, ready to come up. Some men were there before four o'clock, when the whistle blew home-ah! but Morel, whose stall, a poor one, was at this time about a mile and a half away from the bottom, worked steadily till the first shift stopped, then he finished also. This day, however, the miner was sick of the work. At two o'clock he looked at his watch, by the light of the green candle—he was in a safe working—and again at half-past two. He was leaving at a place of work that was in the way for the next day's work. As he sat on his bench, or knuckled, giving hard blows with his pick, "Gaaa—gaaa!" he went.

"Shall we drink, Barry?" cried Barker, his fellow butty.

"Finish! Nivve while the world stands!" growled Morel.

And he went on striking. He was tired.

"It's a heart-breaking job," said Barker.

But Morel was well-compensated, at the end of his tether, to anyone. Still he struck and hacked with all his might.

"The night as well leave it, Walter," said Barker. "It'll do no-murrows, without this hackin' thy gun out."

"I'll lay no b—— finger on this to-morrow, lar'ell," cried Morel.

"Oh, well, if the woman, somebody else 'll ha'e to," said Barker. Then Morel continued to strike.

"Hup-up there—down-a!" cried the men, leaving the rest still. Morel continued to strike.

"The'll happen catch me up," said Barker, departing.

"'Sarry" is a common form of address. It is, perhaps, a corruption of "sirrah."

When he had given Mabel left alone, felt savage. He had not finished his job. He had overworked himself into a frenzy. Rising, wet with sweat, he threw his tool down, pulled on his coat, blew out his candle, took his lamp, and went. Down the main road the lights of the other men went swinging. There was a hollow sound of many voices. It was a long, heavy tramp undisturbed.

He sat at the bottom of the pit, where the great drops of water fell splash. Many colliers were waiting their turn to go up, talking softly. Mabel gave his answers short and disagreeable.

"It's raining, Sorry," said old Giles, who had had the news from the top.

Mabel found no comfort. He had his old umbrella, which he loved, in the lamp cabin. At last he took his stand on the chain, and was at the top in a moment. Then he handed in his lamp and got his umbrella, which he had brought as an excuse for one-umbrella. He stood on the edge of the pit-bank for a moment, looking out over the fields; grey rain was falling. The tracks stood full of wet, bright coal. Water ran down the sides of the waggons, over the white "C. W. and Co." Colliers, walking indifferently to the rain, were crossing down the line and up the field, a grey, dismal host. Mabel put up his umbrella, and took pleasure from the peppering of the drops thence.

As along the road to Butterwood the miners tramped, wet and grey and dirty, but their red scarves talking with animation. Mabel also walked with a gang, but he said nothing. His forehead secretly as he went. Many men passed him the Prince of Wales or into Ellen's. Mabel, feeling sufficiently disagreeable to resist temptation, trudged along under the dripping roof that overhung the park wall, and down the road of Greenfield Lane.

Mr. Morel lay in bed, listening to the rain, and the feet of the colliers from Milnrow, their voices, and the bang, bang of the gates as they went through the stile up the field.

"There's some herb been behind the pantry-door," she said. "Th' master 'd want a drink, if he doesn't stop."

But he was here, so she concluded he had called for a drink, since it was raining. What did he care about the child or her?

She was very ill when her children were born.

"What is it?" she asked, feeling sick to death.

"A boy."

And she took consolation in that. The thought of being the mother of men was warming in her heart. She looked at the child. It had blue eyes, and a lot of fair hair, and was heavy. Her love came up hot, in spite of everything. She had it in bed with her.

Mabel, thinking nothing, dragged his way up the garden path,

weary and angry. He closed his umbrella, and stood it in the dock; then he slithered his heavy boots into the kitchen. Mrs. Bower appeared in the inner doorway.

"Well," she said, "she's about as bad as she can be. It's a lousy child."

The miner grunted, put his empty snap-bag and his tin bottle on the dresser, went back into the millinery and hung up his coat, then came and dropped into his chair.

"Hain yer got a drink?" he asked.

The woman went into the pantry. There was heard the pop of a cork. She set the mug, with a little, disguised rap, on the table before him. He drank, gasped, wiped his big moustache on the end of his scarf, drank, gasped, and lay back in his chair. The woman would not speak to him again. She set his dinner before him, and went upstairs.

"Was that the matter?" asked Mrs. Bower.

"I've gave him his dinner," replied Mrs. Bower.

After he had sat with his arms on the table—he resented the fact that Mrs. Bower put on cloth on for him, and gave him a little place, instead of a full-sized dinner-place—he began to eat. The fact that his wife was ill, that he had another boy, was nothing to him at that moment. He was too tired; he wanted his dinner; he wanted to sit with his arms lying on the board; he did not like having Mrs. Bower about. The fire was too small to please him.

After he had finished his meal, he sat for twenty minutes; then he staked up a big fire. Then, in his stockings and feet, he went reluctantly upstairs. It was a struggle to face his wife at this moment, and he was tired. His face was black, and smeared with soot. His dingy hat dried again, making the dirt in. He had a dirty woollen scarf round his throat. So he stood at the foot of the bed.

"Well, how are yer, then?" he asked.

"I s'ud be all right," she answered.

"H'm!"

He stood at a loss what to say next. He was tired, and this bother was rather a nuisance to him, and he didn't quite know where he was.

"A lad, she says," he stammered.

She turned down the sheet and showed the child.

"Bless him!" he murmured. Which made her laugh, because he blamed by none—pretending paternal emotion, which he did not feel just then.

"Go now," she said.

"I will, my lan," he answered, turning away.

Disinited, he wanted to kiss her, but he dared not. She half wanted him to kiss her, but could not bring herself to give any sign. She only breathed freely when he was gone out of the room again, leaving behind him a faint smell of pin-dirt.

Mrs. Morel had a visit every day from the Congregational deaconess. Mr. Henson was young, and very poor. His wife had died at the birth of his first baby, so he remained alone in the house. He was a Bachelor of Arts of Cambridge, very shy, and no preacher. Mrs. Morel was fond of him, and he depended on her. For hours he talked to her, when she was well. He became the god-parent of the child.

Occasionally the minister stayed to tea with Mrs. Morel. Then she laid the cloth early, got out her best cups, with a little green ring, and hoped Morel would not come too soon; indeed, if he stayed for a plot, she would not mind this day. She had always two dinners to cook, because the beloved children should have their chief meal at midday, whereas Morel needed his at five o'clock. So Mr. Henson would hold the baby, while Mrs. Morel beat up a butter-pudding or peeled the potatoes, and he, watching her all the time, would discuss the new papers. His ideas were quaint and fantastic. She brought him judiciously to earth. It was a discussion of the wedding at Cana.

"When He changed the water into wine at Cana," he said, "that is a symbol that the ordinary life, even the blood, of the married husband and wife, which had before been undisturbed, like water, became filled with the Spirit, and was as wine, because, when love enters, the whole spiritual constitution of a man changes, is filled with the Holy Ghost, and almost his form is altered."

Mrs. Morel thought to herself:

"Yes, poor fellow, his young wife is dead; that is why he makes his love last the Holy Ghost."

They were halfway down their first cup of tea when they heard the clatter of pin-boom.

"Good gracious!" exclaimed Mrs. Morel, in spite of herself.

The minister looked rather scared. Morel stared. He was feeling rather savage. He nodded a "How d'yer do" to the deaconess, who rose to shake hands with him.

"Nay," said Morel, showing his hand, "look there at it! The silver wants to shake hands w' a hand like that, don't yer? There's too much pin-dirt and shovel-dirt on it."

The minister flushed with confusion, and sat down again. Mrs. Morel rose, carried out the remaining macarons. Morel took off his coat, dragged his armchair to table, and sat down heavily.

"Are you tired?" asked the clergyman.

"Tired? I *hate* that," replied Mord. "I *do* don't know what it is to be tired, so I'm tired."

"No," replied the clergyman.

"Why, look *yer* 'ere," said the minister, showing the shoulders of his singlet. "It's a bit dry now, but it's wet as a cloth with sweat even *yer*. Feel it."

"Goodness!" cried Mrs. Mord. "Mr. Hinton don't want to feel *your* watty singlet."

The clergyman put out his hand gingerly.

"No, perhaps he don't," said Mord; "but it's all come out of me, whether or not. *Ar'* *wer*, day *alike* my singlet's wotings' wet. 'Aven't you got a drink, Minda, for a man when he comes home *barfled* up from the pit?"

"You know you drink all the beer," said Mrs. Mord, pouring out his tea.

"*Ar'* was there no more to be got?" Turning to the clergyman—"A man gets that *caked* up wif th' *ther*, you know,—that clogged up down a mainline, he needs a drink when he comes home."

"I am sure he does," said the clergyman.

"But it's tea to see if there's *oot* for him."

"There's water—and there's tea," said Mrs. Mord.

"Water! It's not water wif'll *clew* his throat."

He poured out a saucerful of tea, blew it, and sucked it up through his great black moustache, sighing afterwards. Then he poured out another saucerful, and stood his cup on the table.

"My cloth!" said Mrs. Mord, putting it on a plate.

"A man as comes home as I *do*'s too tired to care about cloths," said Mord.

"Pay!" exclaimed his wife, excitedly.

The room was full of the smell of meat and vegetables and *pit-dishes*.

He leaned over to the miniature, his great moustache thrust forward, his mouth very red in his black face.

"Mr. Hinton," he said, "a man as has been down the black hole all day, *dingin'* away at a coal face, yf, a right harder than that walk—"

"Needs't make a *meat* of it," put in Mrs. Mord.

She hated her husband because, whenever he had an audience, he whined and played for sympathy. Withers sitting nearest the baby, hated him, with a boy's hatred, the false sentiment, and the stupid treatment of his mother. Annie had never liked him; she merely avoided him.

When the visitors had gone, Mrs. Mord looked at her clock.

"A fine meal," she said.

"Don't think I'm going to sit wif my arms danglin', cos th's got a parson for tea wif them?" he bawled.

They were both angry, but she said nothing. The baby began to cry, and Mrs. Mord, picking up a soappan from the hearth, accidentally broke it across Annie on the head, whereupon the girl began to wail, and Mord to shout at her. In the midst of this pantomime, William looked up at the big glassed box over the mantelpiece and read distinctly:

"God Bless Our Home!"

Whereupon Mrs. Mord, trying to smother the baby, jumped up, rubbed at him, bowed his ears, saying:

"What are you putting in for?"

And then she sat down and laughed, till tears ran over her cheeks, while William licked the stool he had been sitting on, and Mord growled:

"I cannot see what there is so much to laugh at."

One evening, directly after the parson's visit, feeling unable to bear herself since another display from her husband, she took Annie and the baby and went out. Mord had kicked William, and the mother would never forgive him.

She went over the sheep-bridge and across a corner of the meadow to the cricket-ground. The meadows reared one upon of ripe, evening light, whispering with the distant mill-race. She sat on a seat under the slides in the cricket-ground, and looked the evening. Before her, level and solid, spread the big green cricket-field, like the bed of a sea of light. Children played in the black shadow of the pavilion. Many rods, high up, came sailing home across the softly-woven sky. They swooped in a long curve down into the golden glow, commencing, rising, wheeling, like black flakes on a slow vortex, over a tree-chump that made a dark box among the pasture.

A few geese were preening, and Mrs. Mord could hear the cluck of the fowl, and the voices of men suddenly raised; could see the white forms of men chiding already over the green, upon which already the under shadows were smouldering. Away at the grange, one side of the hay-stack was lit up, the other sides blue-grey. A waggon of sheaves rocked small white for smoking yellow light.

The sun was going down. Early upon evening, the hills of Dorsetshire were blazed over with red sunset. Mrs. Mord watched the sun sink from the glassing sky, leaving a soft flower-like overhead, while the western space went red, as if all the fire had

sewn down there, leaving the bell one forever blue. The mountainous barriers across the field stood fairly out from the dark loam, for a moment. A few clouds of moss in a corner of the fallow stood up as if alive; she imagined them bowing; perhaps her son would be a Joseph. In the east, a mirrored sunset flamed pink opposite the west's scarlet. The big haystacks on the hillside, that burst into the glare, were cold.

With Mrs. Morel it was one of those still moments when the small time vanishes, and the beauty of things stands out, and she had the peace and the strength to see herself. Now and again, a swallow cut close to her. Now and again, Annie came up with a handful of elder-currants. The baby was restless on his mother's knee, clambering with his hands at the light.

Mrs. Morel looked down at him. She had decided this baby like a catastrophe, because of her feeling for her husband. And now she felt strangely towards the infant. Her heart was heavy because of the child, almost as if it were unhealthy, or malformed. Yet it seemed quite well. But she noticed the peculiar knitting of the baby's brows, and the peculiar heaviness of its eyes, as if it were trying to understand something that was pain. She felt, when she looked at her child's dark, bounding pupils, as if a burden were on her heart.

"He looks as if he was thinking about something—quite sorrowful," said Mrs. Kirie.

Stoically, looking at him, the heavy feeling at the mother's heart melted into passionate grief. She bowed over him, and a few tears shook swiftly out of her very heart. The baby lifted his fingers.

"My hand!" she cried softly.

And at that moment she felt, in some far lower place of her soul, that she and her husband were guilty.

The baby was looking up at her. It had blue eyes like her own, but its look was heavy, steady, as if it had realised something that had touched some point of its soul.

In her arms lay the delicate baby. Its deep blue eyes always looking at her unblinking, seemed to draw her innermost thoughts out of her. She no longer loved her husband; she had not wanted this child to come, and there it lay in her arms and pulled at her heart. She felt as if she moved along that had connected its frail little body with him had not been broken. A wave of hot love went over her to the infant. She held it close to her face and breast. With all her force, with all her soul she would make up to it for having brought it into the world unknown. She would love it all the more now it was here; carry it in her love. Its close,

knowing you gave her pain and fear. Did it know all about her? When it lay under her heart, had it been knowing then? Was there a reproach in the look? She felt the narrow web in her bones, with fear and pain.

Once more she was aware of the sun lying red on the rim of the hill opposite. She suddenly held up the child in her hands.

"Look!" she said. "Look, my pretty!"

She thrust the infant forward to the crimson, flicking sun, almost with relief. She saw him hit his little bed. Then she put him to her breast again, ashamed almost of her impulse to give him back whence he came.

"If he lives," she thought to herself, "what will become of him—what will he be?"

Her heart was anxious.

"I will call him 'Paul,'" she said suddenly; she knew not why.

After a while she went home. A few shadows were lying over the deep green meadows, darkening all.

As she expected, she found the house empty. But Moorl was home by ten o'clock, and that day, at least, rested peacefully.

Water Moorl was, at this time, exceedingly irritable. His work seemed to exhaust him. When he came home he did not speak civilly to anybody. If the fire were rather low he talked about that; he grumbled about his dinner; if the children made a chatter he shouted at them in a way that made their mother's blood boil, and made them hate him.

On the Friday, he was not home by seven o'clock. The baby was unwell, and was restless, crying if he were put down. Mrs. Moorl, tired to death, and still weak, was scarcely under control.

"I wish the midwife would come," she said wearily to herself.

The child at last sank down to sleep in her arms. She was too tired to carry him to the cradle.

"But I'll say nothing, whatever else he says," she said. "It only wakes me up; I won't say anything. But I know if he does anything it'll make my blood boil," she added to herself.

She sighed, hearing him creaking, as if it were something she could not bear. He, taking his revenge, was nearly drunk. She kept her head bent over the child as he creaked, not wishing to see him. But it went through her like a flask of hot fire when, in passing, he lurched against the dresser, setting the dish rattling, and clashed as the white jar broke for support. He hung up his hat and coat, then returned, stood glowering from a distance at her, as she sat bowed over the child.

"Is there nothing to eat in the house?" he asked, insolently, as

if to a servant. In certain stages of his intoxication he affected the clipped, mincing speech of the tavern. Mrs. Mased hated him most in this condition.

"You know what there is in the house," she said, so coldly, it sounded impersonal.

He stared and gazed at her without moving a muscle.

"I asked a civil question, and I expect a civil answer," he said affectedly.

"And you got it," she said, still ignoring him.

He glowered again. Then he came unsteadily forward. He leaned on the table with one hand, and with the other jerked at the table drawer to get a talk to his head. The drawer won't because he pulled sideways. In a temper he dragged it, so that it flew out backily, and spoons, forks, knives, a few silver ornamental things, splashed with a clatter and a clang upon the brick floor. The baby gave a little convulsed start.

"What are you doing, dummy, drunken fool?" the mother cried.

"Then the should get the famin' things thosen. The should get up, like other women have to, an' wait on a man."

"Wait on you—wait on you!" she cried. "Yes, I see myself."

"Yes, an' I'll learn thee that's got to. Wait on me, yes, the sh'k wait on me——"

"Never, unless I'd wait on a dog at the door first."

"What—what?"

He was trying to fit in the drawer. At her last speech he turned round. His face was crimson, his eyes bloodshot. He stared at her one silent second in throat.

"P-h!" she went quickly, in contempt.

He jerked at the drawer in his excitement. It fell, out sharply on his shin, and on the reflex he flung it at her.

One of the corners caught her brow at the shallow drawer crashed into the fireplace. She reeled, almost fell staggered from her chair. To her very end she was sick; she clasped the child tightly to her bosom. A few moments elapsed; then, with an effort, she brought herself to. The baby was crying plaintively. Her left brow was bleeding rather profusely. As she glanced down at the child, her brain reeling, some drops of blood soaked into its white shirt; but the baby was at least not hurt. She braced her head to keep equilibrium, so that the blood ran into her eye.

Walter Mased remained as he had stood, leaning on the table with one hand, looking blank. When he was sufficiently sure of his balance, he went across to her, scooped, caught hold of the

back of her rocking-chair, almost tipping her over; then, leaning forward over her, and swaying as he spoke, he said, in tone of wondering concern:

"Did it catch that?"

He swayed again, as if he would pitch on to the child. With the catastrophe he had lost all balance.

"Go away," she said, struggling to keep her presence of mind. He blundered. "Let's—let's look at it," he said, blundering again.

"Go away!" she cried.

"Let me—let me look at it, too."

She wadded him off drunk, felt the weapest pull of his swaying grasp on the back of her rocking-chair.

"Go away," she said, and weakly she pushed him off.

He stood, unsteady in balance, gazing upon her. Summoning all her strength she rose, the baby on one arm. By a great effort of will, moving as if in sleep, she went across to the nursery, where she bathed her eye for a minute in cold water; but she was too dizzy. Afraid lest she should swoon, she returned to her rocking-chair, trembling in every fibre. By instinct, she kept the baby clamped.

Maed, hitherto, had succeeded in pushing the driver back into its cavity, and was on his knees, gazing, with numb pain, for the scattered spores.

Her brow was still bleeding. Frenzied Maed got up and came crawling like a snail towards her.

"What has it done to thee, Maed?" he asked, in a very wretched, humble tone.

"You can see what it's done," she answered.

He stood, bending forward, supported on his hands, which gripped his legs just above the knee. He dared to look at the wound. She drew away from the danger of his face with his great mountain, averting her own face as much as possible. As he looked at her, who was cold and insipid as stone, with mouth shut tight, he shivered with feebleness and hopelessness of spirit. He was turning slowly away, when he saw a drop of blood fall from the twisted wound into the baby's fragile gleaming hair. Fascinated, he watched the heavy dark drop hang in the gleaming dool, and pull down the gossamer. Another drop fell. It would soak through in the baby's scalp. He watched, fascinated, feeling it seek in; then, finally, his wretched brain.

"What of this child?" was all his wife said to him. But her loss, intense tears brought his head lower. She refused. "Get me some wadding out of the middle drawer," she said.

THE BIRTH OF PAUL

He stumbled away very obediently, presently returning with a pad, which she slipped before the fire, then put on her forehead, as she sat with the baby on her lap.

"Now that clean piece!"

Again he rummaged and fumbled in the drawer, returning passively with a red, narrow scarf. She took it, and with trembling fingers proceeded to bind it round her head.

"Let me tie it for thee," he said humbly.

"I can do it myself," she replied. When it was done she went upstairs, telling him to rub the fire and lock the door.

In the morning Mrs. Morel said:

"I knocked against the latch of the coal-place, when I was getting a rubber in the dark, because the candle blew out." Her two small children looked up at her with wide, dismayed eyes. They said nothing, but their pursed lips seemed to express the unconscious tragedy they felt.

Walter Morel lay in bed next day until nearly eleven o'clock. He did not think of the previous evening's work. He scarcely thought of anything, but he would not think of that. His lay and suffered like a walking dog. He had hurt himself more; and he was the more damaged because he would never say a word to her, or express his sorrow. He tried to wriggle out of it. "It was her own fault," he said to himself. Nothing, however, could prevent his inner consciousness inflicting on him the punishment which ate into his spirit like rust, and which he could only alleviate by drinking.

He felt as if he had not the initiative to get up, or to say a word, or to move, but could only lie like a log. Moreover, he had himself violent pains in the head. It was Sunday. Towards noon he rose, put himself back in the pantry, ate it with his head dropped, then pulled on his boots, and went out, to return at three o'clock slightly tipsy and relieved; then came more straight to bed. He rose again at six in the evening, had tea and went straight out.

Sunday was the same: bed till noon, the Palmerton Arms till 1.30, dinner, and bed; scarcely a word spoken. When Mrs. Morel went upstairs, towards four o'clock, to put on her Sunday dress, he was fast asleep. She would have felt sorry for him, if he had once said, "Well, I'm sorry." But now he looked so himself it was her fault. And so he broke himself. So she merely left him alone. There was this deadlock of passion between them, and she was stronger.

The family began tea. Sunday was the only day when all sat down to meals together.

"Isn't my father going to get up?" asked William.

"Let him be," the mother replied.

There was a feeling of misery over all the house. The children, breathless with the shock that was poisoned, and they felt dreary. They were rather disconsolate, did not know what to do, what to play at.

Immediately Mord woke he got straight out of bed. That was characteristic of him all his life. He was all for activity. The protracted inactivity of two mornings was stifling him.

It was now six o'clock when he got down. This time he entered without hesitation, his enduring sensitiveness having hardened again. He did not care any longer what the family thought or felt.

The tea-things were on the table. William was standing aloof from The Child's Own, Annie listening and eating cannally. "Why?" Both children looked into silence as they heard the approaching clank of their father's stockinged feet, and shrank as he entered. Yet he was usually indulgent to them.

Mord made the meal alone, brutally. His eat and drink were miserly than he had need. No one spoke to him. The family life withdrew, shrank away, and became hushed as he entered. But he cared no longer about his alienation.

Immediately he had finished tea he rose with alacrity to go out. It was this alacrity, this haste to be gone, which astonished him. Mord. As she heard him scolding heavily in cold water, heard the eager scratch of the stool comb on the side of the bowl, as he washed his face, she closed her eyes in despair. As he bent over, facing his boots, there was a certain vulgar gusto in his movement that divided him from the reserved, watchful rest of the family. He always ran away from the battle with himself. Even in his own heart's privacy, he deceived himself, saying, "If she hadn't told me-and-on, it would never have happened. She asked for what she's got."¹ The children waited in restraint during his preparations. When he had gone, they sighed with relief.

He closed the door behind him, and was glad. It was a rainy evening. The Palmers were would be the center. He hurried forward in anticipation. All the dark roofs of the Bottoms shone black with wet. The roads, always dark with coal-dust, were full of blackish mud. He hurried along. The Palmers were windows were steamed over. The passage was paddled with wet feet. But the air was warm, if that, and full of the sound of voices and the smell of beer and smoke.

"What shall he's, Walter?" cried a voice, as soon as Mord appeared in the doorway.

"Oh, Jim, cry lad, whether has that young trac?"

The man made a seat for him, and took him in warmly. He

was glad. In a minute or two they had thrust all responsibility out of him, all shame, all trouble, and he was clear as a bell for a jolly night.

On the Wednesday following, Marcel was penitent. He dreading his wife. Having hurt her, he hated her. He did not know what to do with himself that evening, having not even response with which to go to the Palace, and being already rather deeply in debt. So, while his wife was down the garden with the child, he hurried to the top drawer of the dresser where she kept her purse, forced it, and looted inside. It contained a half-crown, two halfpennies, and a shilling. So he took the shilling, put the purse carefully back, and went on.

The next day, when she wanted to pay the grocerwoman, she looked in the purse for her shilling, and her heart sank to her shoes. Then she sat down and thought: "H'm there a shilling? I hadn't seen it, had I? And I hadn't left it anywhere else!"

She was much put about. She hunted round everywhere for it. And, as she sought, the conviction came into her heart that her husband had taken it. What she had in her purse was all the money she possessed. But that he should sneak it from her thus was unbearable. He had done so twice before. The first time she had not accused him, and at the week-end he had put the shilling again into her purse. So that was how she had known he had taken it. The second time he had not paid back.

This time she felt it was too much. When he had had his dinner—he came home early that day—she said to him coldly:

"Did you take shillings out of my purse last night?"

"Me!" he said, looking up in an offended way. "No, I didn't! I never clapped eyes on your purse."

But she could detect the lie.

"Why, you know you did," she said quietly.

"I tell you I didn't," he shouted. "Yer at me again, are yer? I've had about enough o' it."

"So you stick shillings out of my purse while I'm taking the clothes in."

"I'll may yer pay for this," he said, pushing back his chair in desperation. He brushed and got washed, then went determinedly upstairs. Presently he came down dressed, and with a big bundle in a blue-checked, waterproof handkerchief.

"And now," he said, "you'll see me again when you do."

"I'll be before I want ye," she replied; and at that he marched out of the house with his bundle. She sat trembling slightly, but her heart brimming with vengeance. What would she do if he went to some other pit, strucked work, and got in with another

women? But she knew him too well—he couldn't. She was dead sure of him. Nevertheless her heart was gnawed inside her.

"Where's my dad?" said William, coming in from school.

"He says he's run away," replied the mother.

"Where to?"

"Oh, I don't know. He's taken a bundle in the blue handkerchief, and says he's not coming back."

"What shall we do?" cried the boy.

"Oh, never trouble, he won't go far."

"But if he doesn't come back," wailed Annie.

And she and William retired to the sofa and wept. Mrs. Maud sat and laughed.

"You pair of gobs!" she exclaimed. "You'll see him before the night's out."

But the children were not to be consoled. Twilight came on. Mrs. Maud grew anxious from very weariness. One part of her said, it would be a relief to see the last of him; another part distressed because of keeping the children; and inside her, as yet, she could not quite let him go. At the bottom, she knew very well he could not go.

When she went down to the coal-place at the end of the garden, however, she felt something behind the door. So she looked. And there in the dark lay the big blue bundle. She sat on a piece of coal in front of the bundle and laughed. Every time she saw it, so fat and yet so ignominious, stuck into its corner in the dark, with its ends flopping like dejected ears from the knees, she laughed again. She was relieved.

Mrs. Maud sat waiting. He had not any money, she knew, so if he stopped he was running up a bill. She was very tired of him—tired to death. He had not even the courage to carry his bundle beyond the yard-end.

As she meditated, at about nine o'clock, he opened the door and came in, shivering, and yet sulky. She said not a word. He took off his coat, and slunk to his armchair, where he began to take off his boots.

"You'd better fetch your bundle before you take your boots off," she said quietly.

"You may thank your stars I've come back to-night," he said, looking up from under his drooped head, sulkily, trying to be imperative.

"Why, where should you have gone? You daresn't even go your parcel through the yard-end," she said.

He looked such a fool she was not even angry with him. He continued to take his boots off and prepare for bed.

"I don't know what's in your blue handkerchief!" she said.
 "But if you love it the children shall have it in the morning!"

Whereupon he got up and went out of the house, returning promptly and crossing the kitchen with inverted face, sweeping upward. As Mrs. Blount saw him flick quickly through the lower doorway, holding his bundle, she laughed to herself: but her heart was bitter, because she had loved him.

The Casting off of Moral—the Taking on of William

DURING the next week Mowbray's temper was almost unbearable. Like all widows, he was a great lover of medicine, which, strangely enough, he would often pay for himself.

"You must get me a drop of lacy viral," he said. "It's a wonder at we comes he's a jup 't' the 'ouse."

So Mrs. Mowbray bought him chair of chair, his favourite first medicine. And he made himself a jug of wormwood tea. He had hanging in the attic great bunches of dried herbs: wormwood, rue, burn-sword, dill-flowers, parsley-roots, marsh-mallows, hyssop, dandelion, and rennetary. Usually there was a jug of one or other decoction standing on the hear, from which he drank largely.

"Good!" he said, snatching his lips after wormwood. "Good!" And he ordered the children to try.

"It's better than any of your tea or your corns stone," he vowed. But they were not to be tempted.

This time, however, neither pills nor viral nor all his herbs would shift the "sassy press in his head." He was sickening for an attack of an inflammation of the brain. He had never been well since his sleeping on the ground when he went with Jerry to Nottingham. Since then he had drunk and worried. Now he felt seriously ill, and Mrs. Mowbray had him to nurse. He was one of the worst patients imaginable. But, in spite of all, and putting aside the fact that he was head-widow, the never quite wanted him to die. Still there was one part of her wanted him for herself.

The neighbours were very good to her: occasionally some had the children in to nurse, occasionally some would do the down-stairs work for her, and would mind the baby for a day. But it was a great drag, nevertheless. It was not every day the neighbours helped. Then she had nursing of baby and husband, cleaning and cooking, everything to do. She was quite worn out, but she did what was wanted of her.

And the money was just sufficient. She had sevenpence shillings a week from clubs, and every Friday Barker and the other burs put a portion of the mat's profits for Mowbray's wife. And the neighbours made broths, and gave eggs, and such little' vittos. If

they had not helped her so generously in those times. Mrs. Wood would never have pulled through, without knowing debts that would have dragged her down.

The weeks passed. Morde, almost against hope, grew better. He had a fine constitution, so that, even on the morbid, he went straight forward to recovery. Soon he was pottering about downstairs. During his illness his wife had spent him a fortnight. Now he wanted her to continue. He often put his hand to his head, pulled down the corners of his mouth, and disguised pains he did not feel. But there was no deceiving her. At last she calmly smiled to herself. Then she scolded him sharply.

"Goodness, man, don't be so lachrymose."

That wounded him slightly, but still he continued to feign sickness.

"I wouldn't be such a mardy baby," said his wife shortly.

Then he was indignant, and started under his breath, like a boy. He was forced to remain a normal tone, and to cease to whine.

Nevertheless, there was a state of peace in the house for some time. Mrs. Morde was more tolerant of him, and he, depending on her almost like a child, was rather happy. Neither knew that she was more tolerant because she loved him less. Up till this time, in spite of all, he had been her husband and her man. She had felt that, more or less, what he did to himself he did to her. Her living depended on him. There were many, many stages in the stifling of her love for him, but it was always stifling.

Now, with the birth of this third baby, herself no longer so towards him, helplessly, but was like a rife that scarcely ever, standing off from him. After this she scarcely desired him. And, standing more aloof from him, not feeling him so much part of herself, but merely part of her circumstances, she did not mind so much what he did, could leave him alone.

There was the habit, the whiffiness about the ensuing year, which is like syphilis in a man's life. His wife was casting him off, half regretfully, but relentlessly: casting him off and turning now her love and life to the children. Hereafterward he was more or less a habit. And he half acquiesced, as so many men do, yielding their place to their children.

During his recuperation, when it was really over between them, both made an effort to come back somewhat to the old relationship of the first months of their marriage. He sat at home and, when the children were in bed, and she was sewing—she did all her sewing by hand, made all shirts and children's clothing—he

would read to her from the newspaper, slowly pronouncing and delivering the words like a man pitching quails. Often she hurried him on, giving him a phrase in anticipation. And then he took her words humbly.

The affections between them were peculiar. There would be the soft, slight "click" of her needle, the sharp "pop" of his lips as he let out the smoke, the warmth, the sink on the burn as he spat in the fire. Then her thoughts turned to William. Already he was getting a big boy. Already he was top of the class, and the master said he was the smartest lad in the school. She saw him a man, young, full of vigour, making the world glow again for her.

And Moorl sitting there, quite alone, and having nothing to think about, would be feeling vaguely uncomfortable. His soul would reach out in its blind way to her and find her gone. He felt a sort of emptiness, almost like a vacuum in his soul. He was unsettled and restless. Soon he could not live in that atmosphere, and he suffered his wife. Both felt an oppression on their breathing when they were left together for some time. Then he went to bed and the arched down to enjoy himself alone, working, thinking, living.

Meanwhile another infant was coming, fruit of this little peace and tenderness between the separating parents. Paul was seventeen months old when the new baby was born. He was then a plump, pale child, quiet, with heavy blue eyes, and with the peculiar slight knitting of the brows. The last child was also a boy, fair and bonny. Mrs. Moorl was sorry when she knew she was with child, both for economic reasons and because she did not love her husband; but not for the sake of the infant.

They called the baby Arthur. He was very pretty, with a mop of gold curls, and he loved his father from the first. Mrs. Moorl was glad this child loved the father. Hearing the mother's footsteps, the baby would put up his arms and cry. And if Moorl were in good temper, he called back immediately, in his hoarse, mellow voice:

"What then, my beauty? I sh'll come to thee in a minute."

And as soon as he had taken off his pit-coat, Mrs. Moorl would put an apron round the child, and give him to his father.

"What a sight the lad looks!" she would exclaim sometimes, taking back the baby, that was snatched on the feet from his father's knees and play. Then Moorl laughed joyfully.

"He's a little collier, bless his bit o' meanness!" he exclaimed.

And thus were the happy moments of her life won, when the children included the father in her heart.

Meanwhile William grew bigger and stronger and more active,

THE CASTING OFF OF MOORE.

while Paul, always rather delicate and quiet, got thinner, and looked after his mother like her shadow. He was usually active and interested, but sometimes he would have fits of depression. Then the mother would find the boy of seven or ten crying on the sofa.

"What's the matter?" she asked, and got no answer.

"What's the matter?" she inquired, getting cross.

"I don't know," sobbed the child.

So she tried to reason him out of it, or to amuse him, but without effect. It made her feel beside herself. Then the father, always impatient, would jump from his chair and shout:

"If he doesn't stop, I'll smother him till he does."

"You'll do nothing of the sort," said the mother coldly. And then she carried the child into the yard, plunged him into his little chair, and said: "Now cry there, Mummy!"

And then a butterfly on the rhubarb leaves perhaps caught his eye, or at last he tried himself to sleep. These fits were not often, but they caused a shadow in Mrs. Moor's heart, and her treatment of Paul was different from that of the other children.

Suddenly one morning as she was looking down the alley at the Bureau for the hair-cut, she heard a voice calling her. It was the thin little Mrs. Anthony in brown velvet.

"Here, Mrs. Moor, I want to tell you about your Willie."

"Oh, do you?" replied Mrs. Moor. "Why, what's the matter?"

"A lad as gets 'old of another an' rips his clothes off'n 'is back," Mrs. Anthony said, "wants showing something."

"Your Alfred's as old as my William," said Mrs. Moor.

"'Appen 'e is, but that doesn't give him a right to get hold of the boy's collar, an' tear it clean off his back."

"Well," said Mrs. Moor, "I don't thrash my children, and even if I did, I should want to hear their side of the tale."

"They'd happen be a bit better if they did get a good hiding," retorted Mrs. Anthony. "When it comes on ripplin' a lad's down collar off'n 'is back a-purpose——"

"I'm sure he didn't do it on purpose," said Mrs. Moor.

"Make me a liar!" shouted Mrs. Anthony.

Mrs. Moor moved away and closed her gate. Her hand trembled as she held her ring of bars.

"But I'll let your master know," Mrs. Anthony cried after her.

At dinner-time, when William had finished his meal and wanted to be off again—he was then eleven years old—his mother said to him:

"What did you tear Alfred Anthony's collar for?"

"When did I tear his collar?"

"I don't know when, but his mother says you did."

"Why—it was yesterday—or? It was torn already?"

"But you tore it more."

"Well, I'd got a cobbler as 'ad fixed me—was—Mr. Alf Anthony's says:

'Adam an' Eve an' pinch-me,
Went down to a river to bide,
Adam an' Eve got drowneded,
Who do you think got saved?'

As' so I says, 'Oh, Mother, an' an' I pinched 'em, an' 'e was mad, an' so he snatched my cobbler an' run off with it. As' so I ran after 'em, an' when I was gen'ral hold of 'e, 'e dinged, an' 'e ripped 'is collar. But I got my cobbler—"

He pulled from his pocket a black old horse-chestnut hanging on a string. This old cobbler had "cobbled"—hit and mended—severous other cobbles on similar strings. So the boy was proud of his victory.

"Well," said Mrs. Morel, "you know you've got no right to rip his collar."

"Well, our mother!" he answered. "I never meant t' do it—an' it was only an old indimitable collar as was torn already."

"Next time," said his mother, "you be more careful. I shouldn't like it if you came home with your collar torn off."

"I don't care, our mother; I never did it a-purpose."

The boy was rather miserable at being reprimanded.

"No—well, you be more careful."

William fled away, glad to be unscathed. And Mrs. Morel who hated any bother with the neighbours, thought she would explain to Mrs. Anthony, and the business would be over.

But that evening Morel came in from the pit looking very sour. He stood in the kitchen and glared round, but did not speak for some minutes. Then:

"What's that Willy?" he asked.

"What do you want him for?" asked Mrs. Morel, who had guessed.

"I'll let 'em know when I get him," said Morel, hanging his pin-board on to the dress.

"I suppose Mrs. Anthony's got hold of you and been yarning to you about their Alf's collar," said Mrs. Morel, rather sneering.

"Never mind who's got hold of me," said Morel. "When I get hold of 'em I'll make his bones rattle."

"It's a poor tale," said Mrs. Morel, "that you're so ready to

THE CASTLE OF DOBREL

side with any injury when who likes to come telling tales against your own children."

"I'll learn 'em!" said Mord. "It none matters to me whose lad 's in; 's a name givin' ripple' an' marin' about just as he's a mind."

"Flipping and tearing about!" repeated Mrs. Mord. "He was running after that Alf, who'd taken his collar and he accidentally got hold of his collar, because the other dodged—as an Anthony would."

"I know!" shouted Mord threateningly.

"You would, before you're told," replied his wife bitterly.

"Nicer you mind," sneered Mord. "I know my business."

"That's more than doubtful," said Mrs. Mord, "supposing some head smashed creature had been getting you to thrash your own children."

"I know," repeated Mord.

And he said no more, but sat and nursed his bad temper. Suddenly William sat up, saying:

"Can I have my tea, mother?"

"Tha can ha's supper than that!" shouted Mord.

"Hold your noise, man," said Mrs. Mord; "and don't look so ridiculous."

"He'll look ridiculous before I've done w' him!" shouted Mord rising from his chair and glaring at his son.

William, who was a tall lad for his years, but very sensitive, had gone pale, and was looking in a sort of horror at his father.

"Go out!" Mrs. Mord commanded her son.

William had not the wit to move. Suddenly Mord clenched his fist, and crouched.

"I'll gi's him ' go out! ' " he shouted like an insane thing.

"What!" cried Mrs. Mord, panting with rage. "You shall not touch him for do telling, you shall not!"

"Shanna I?" shouted Mord. "Shanna I?"

And, glaring at the boy, he ran forward. Mrs. Mord spring in between them, with her fist lifted.

"Don't you dare!" she cried.

"What!" he shouted, baffled for the moment. "What?"

She sprang round to her son.

"Go out of the house!" she commanded him in fury.

The boy, as if hypnotized by her, turned suddenly and was gone. Mord rushed to the door, but was too late. He returned, pale under his pinkish with fury. But now his wife was fully roused.

"Only dare!" she said in a loud, ringing voice. "Only dare, without, to lay a finger on that child! You'll regret it for ever!"

He was afraid of her. In a meeting rage, he sat down.

When the children were old enough to be left, Mrs. Morel joined the Women's Guild. It was a little club of women attached to the Co-operative Wholesale Society, which met on Monday nights in the long room over the grocery shop of the Redwood "Co-op." The women were supposed to discuss the benefits to be derived from co-operation, and other social questions. Sometimes Mrs. Morel read a paper. It seemed queer to the children to see their mother, who was always busy about the house, sitting waiting in her rapid fidgets, thinking, referring to books, and writing again. They felt for her an such conscious the deepest respect.

But they loved the Guild. It was the only thing to which they did not grudge their mother—and that partly because she enjoyed it, partly because of the treats they derived from it. The Guild was called by some hostile lookers-on, who found they were getting too independent, the "dat-fut" shop—that is, the gossip-shop. It is true, from off the back of the Guild, the women could look at their houses, at the conditions of their own lives, and find fault. So the children found their women had a new standard of their own, rather disconcerting. And also, Mrs. Morel always had a lot of news on Monday nights, so that the children liked William to be in when their mother came home, because she told him things.

Then, when the lad was thirteen, she got him a job in the "Co-op." office. He was a very clever boy, fresh, with rather rough features and real Viking blue eyes.

"What dost want me wit' a stockshand Jack on 'em fir?" said Morel. "All he'll do is to wear his braces behind out, an' earn none. What's 'e startin' wi'?"

"It doesn't matter what he's starting with," said Mrs. Morel.

"It wouldn't! But 'im I sh' pit wif me, an' 'e'll earn a quoy ten shillin' a wik from de' start. But de shillin' wears' his track-and out on a stool's better than ten shillin' I sh' pit wif me, I know."

"He is no going in the pit," said Mrs. Morel, "and there's an end of it."

"It was good enough for me, but it's not good enough for 'im."

"If your mother got you in the pit at twelve, it's no reason why I should do the same with my lad."

"Twelve! It was a sight afore that!"

"Whenever it was," said Mrs. Morel.

She was very proud of her son. He went to the night-school, and learned shorthand, so that by the time he was sixteen he was the best shorthand clerk and bookkeeper on the place, except

own. Then he taught in the night-school. But he was so busy that only his good nature and his aim protected him.

All the things that men do—the dearest things—William did. He could run like the wind. When he was twelve he won a first prize in a race: an intrepid of glass, shaped like an arrow. It sped proudly on the diamond, and gave Mrs. Morel a keen pleasure. The boy only ran for her. His first home with his arrow, breathless, with a "Look, mother!" That was the first real tribute to herself. She took it like a queen.

"How pretty!" she exclaimed.

Then he began to get ambitious. He gave all his money to his mother. When he earned fourteen shillings a week, she gave him back two for himself, and, as he never drunk, he ate himself rich. He went about with the bourgeois of Beeswood. The townlet contained nothing higher than the clergymen. Then came the bank manager, then the doctors, then the tradespeople, and after that the hosts of soldiers. William began to consort with the sons of the chemist, the schoolmaster, and the tradesman. He played billiards in the Mechanics Hall. Also he danced—this in spite of his mother. All the life that Beeswood offered he enjoyed, from the slopenny-hops down Church Street, to sports and billiards.

Paul was treated to dancing descriptions of all kinds of flower-like ladies, most of whom lived like cut blooms in William's heart for a brief fortnight.

Occasionally some flame would come in pursuit of her smart realm. Mrs. Morel would find a strange girl at the door, and immediately she sniffed the air.

"Is Mr. Morel in?" the damsel would ask appealingly.

"My husband is at home," Mrs. Morel replied.

"I—I mean young Mr. Morel," repeated the maiden painfully.

"Which one? There are several."

Whispering much blushing and murmuring from the fair one.

"I—I met Mr. Morel—at Ripley," she explained.

"Come at a dance!"

"Yes."

"I don't approve of the girls my son meets at dances. And he is not at home."

Then he came home angry with his mother for having turned the girl away so rudely. He was a rascally, yet eager-looking fellow, who walked with long strides, sometimes frowning, often with his cap pushed jolly to the back of his head. Now he came to frowning. He threw his cap on to the sofa, and took his strong jaw in his hand, and glared down at his mother. She was small, with her hair taken straight back from her forehead. She had a

quintessence of authority, and yet of rare warmth. Knowing her son was angry, she trembled inwardly.

"Did a lady call for me yesterday, mother?" he asked.

"I don't know about a lady. There was a girl came."

"And why didn't you tell me?"

"Because I forgot, simply."

He fumed a little.

"A good-looking girl—seemed a lady?"

"I didn't look at her."

"Big brown eyes?"

"I did not look. And tell your girls, my son, that when they're coming after you, they're not to come and ask your mother for you. Tell them that—brown baggages you meet at dancing-dances."

"I'm sure she was a nice girl."

"And I'm sure she wasn't."

There ended the altercation. Over the dancing there was a great rift between the mother and the son. The grievance reached its height when William said he was going to Hacknall Torford—considered a low town—on a fancy-dance ball. He was to be a Highlander. There was a dress he could hire, which one of his friends had had, and which fitted him perfectly. The Highlander suit came home. Mrs. Morel received it coldly and would not unpack it.

"My son came!" cried William.

"There's a parcel in the front-room."

He rushed in and cut the string.

"How do you fancy your son in this?" he said, comparing, showing her the suit.

"You know I don't want to fancy you in it."

On the evening of the dance, when he had come home to dress, Mrs. Morel put on her coat and bonnet.

"Aren't you going to stop and see me mother?" he asked.

"No; I don't want to see you," she replied.

She was rather pale, and her face was closed and hard. She was afraid of her son's going the same way as his father. He harbored a woman, and his heart stood still with anxiety. Then he caught sight of the Highlander bonnet with its ribbons. He picked it up gleefully, dangling her. She went out.

When he was nineteen he suddenly left the Co-op. office and got a situation in Nottingham. In his new place he had thirty shillings a week instead of eighteen. This was indeed a rise. His mother and his father were brimmed up with pride. Everybody praised William. It seemed he was going to get on rapidly. Mrs.

Moriel hoped, with his aid, to help her younger sons. Annie was now studying to be a teacher. Paul, also very clever, was getting on well, having lessons in French and German from his godfather, the clergyman who was still a friend to Mrs. Moriel. Arthur, a spoilt and very good-looking boy, was at the Board-school, but there was talk of him trying to get a scholarship for the High School in Nottingham.

William remained a year at his new post in Nottingham. He was studying hard, and growing ardent. Something seemed to be forcing him. Still he went out to the dances and the river parties. He did not drink. The children were all valued immensely. He came home very late at night, and not yet longer studying. His mother implored him to take more care, to do one thing or another.

"Dance, if you want to dance, my son; but don't think you can work in the office, and then scouse yourself, and then study on top of all. You can't; the human frame won't stand it. Do one thing or the other—scouse yourself or learn Latin; but don't try to do both."

Then he got a place in London, at a hundred and twenty a year. This seemed a fabulous sum. His mother doubted almost whether to rejoice or to grieve.

"They want me in Lime Street on Monday week, mother," he cried, his eyes blazing as he read the letter. Mrs. Moriel felt everything go silent beside her. He read the letter: "' And will you reply by Thursday whether you accept. Yours faithfully—'" They want me, mother, at a hundred and twenty a year, and don't even ask to see me. Didn't I tell you I could do it! Think of me in London! And I can give you twenty pounds a year, more. We'll all be rolling in money."

"We shall, my son," she answered sadly.

It never occurred to him that she might be more hurt at his going away than glad of his success. Indeed, as the days drew near for his departure, her heart began to rise and grow weary with despair. She loved him so much! More than that, she hoped in him to reach. Almost she lived by him. She liked to do things for him: she liked to put a cup for him and to iron his collar, of which he was so proud. It was a joy to her to have him proud of his collar. There was no laundry. So she used to rub away at them with her little nervous toes, to polish them, till they shone from the sheer pressure of her arm. Now she would not do it for him. Now he was going away. She felt almost as if he were going as well out of her heart. He did not seem to leave her inhabited with himself. That was the grief and the pain to her. He took nearly all himself away.

A few days before his departure—he was just twenty—she burned his love-letters. They had hung on a file at the top of the kitchen cupboard. From some of them he had read extracts to his mother. Some of them she had taken the trouble to read herself. But most were too trivial.

Now, on the Saturday morning he said:

"Come on, Podge, let's go through my letters, and you can have the birds and flowers."

Mrs. Morel had done her Saturday's work on the Friday, because he was having a last day's holiday. She was making him a nice cake, which he loved, to take with him. He was anxiously conscious that she was so miserable.

He took the first letter off the file. It was nerve-riveted, and had purple and green thistles. William sniffed the paper.

"Nice smell! Smell."

And he thrust the sheet under Paul's nose.

"Och!" said Paul, breathing in. "What if you eat it? Smell, mother."

His mother ducked her head, like nose down to the paper.

"I don't want to smell their rubbish," she said, sniffing.

"This girl's father," said William, "is as rich as Croesus. He owns property without end. She calls me Lathyrus, because I know French. 'You will see, I've forgiven you'—I like her forgiving me. 'I told mother about you this morning, and she will have much pleasure if you come to tea on Sunday, but she will have to get father's consent also. I sincerely hope he will agree. I will let you know how it transpires. If, however, you—'"

"Let you know how it's what?" interrupted Mrs. Morel.

"Transpires"—oh yes!"

"Transpires!" repeated Mrs. Morel mockingly. "I thought she was so well educated!"

William felt slightly uncomfortable, and abandoned this maiden, giving Paul the owner with the thistles. He continued to read extracts from his letters, some of which amused his mother, some of which saddened her and made her anxious for him.

"My lad," she said, "they're very wise. They know they've only got to flatter your vanity, and you come up to them like a dog that has its head scratched."

"Well, they can't go on scratching for ever," he replied. "And when they've done, I trot away."

"But one day you'll find a string round your neck that you can't pull off," she answered.

"Not me! I'm equal to any of 'em, mother, they needn't flatter themselves."

"You flatter yourself," she said quietly.

Soon there was a heap of rolled blank pages, all that remained of the file of accepted letters, except that Paul had thirty or forty pretty sheets from the custom of the note-paper--swallowers and fags-and-rams and key spears. And William went to London, to start a new file.

The Young Life of Paul

Paul would be back like his mother, slightly and rather small. His fair hair went reddish, and then dark brown; his eyes were grey. He was a pale, quiet child, with eyes that seemed to look, and with a fall, dropping underlip.

As a rule he seemed old for his years. He was so conscious of what other people felt, particularly his mother. When she feared he understood, and could have no peace. His soul seemed always sensitive to her.

As he grew older he became stronger. William was too far removed from him to accept him as a companion. So the smaller boy belonged at first almost entirely to Anne. She was a country and a "lytic-lytic," as her mother called her. But she was intensely fond of her second brother. So Paul was swept round at the behest of Anne, sharing her games. She roared wildly at larky with the other young children of the Institute. And always Paul flew beside her, living her share of the games, having as yet no part of his own. He was quiet and not noticeable. But his sister adored him. He always seemed to care for things if she wanted him to.

She had a big doll of which she was fearfully proud, though not so fond. So she laid the doll on the sofa, and covered it with an antimacassar, to sleep. Then she forgot it. Meanwhile Paul must practice jumping off the sofa arm. So he jumped crash into the face of her hidden doll. Anne rushed up, scored a loud wail, and sat down to weep a day. Paul remained quite still.

"You couldn't tell it was there, mother; you couldn't tell it was there," he repeated over and over. So long as Anne wept for the doll he was helpless with misery. Her grief wore itself out. She forgave her brother—he was so much upset. But a day or two afterwards she was shocked.

"Let's make a sacrifice of Arabella," he said. "Let's burn her."

She was horrified, yet rather fascinated. She wanted to see what the boy would do. He made an altar of books, pulled some of the shavings out of Arabella's body, put the wadded fragments into the hollow face, passed on a little powder, and set the whole thing alight. He watched with wicked satisfaction the drops of

was walt off the broken forehead of Anabella, and deep like went into the flames. So long as the stupid big doll burned he rejoiced in silence. At the end he pined among the embers with a stick, fished out the arms and legs, all blackened, and smashed them under noon.

"That's the sacrifice of Miss Anabella," he said. "An' I'm glad there's nothing left of her."

Which disturbed Annie immensely, although she could say nothing. He seemed to hate the doll so intensely, because he had broken it.

All the children, but particularly Paul, were peculiarly afraid their father, along with their mother. Morel continued to bully and to drink. He had periods, months at a time, when he made the whole life of the family a misery. Paul never forgot coming home from the Band of Hope one Monday evening and finding his mother with her eye swollen and discoloured, his father standing on the hearthrug, feet aside, his head down, and William, just home from work, glaring at his father. There was a silence as the young children entered, but none of the elders looked round.

William was white to the lips, and his fists were clenched. He waited until the children were silent, watching with children's eyes and ears; then he said:

"You cussed, you damn'd do it when I was in."

But Morel's blood was up. His wrong turned on his son. William was bigger, but Morel was hard-muscled, and mad with fury.

"Doesn't it?" he shouted. "Doesn't it? That's much more o' my chelp, my young jockey, an' I'll rends my fist about thee. An' so! I shall that, dost see?"

Morel crouched at the hearth and showed his fist in an ugly, almost beast-like fashion. William was white with rage.

"Will you?" he said, quiet and intense. "It 'ud be the last time, though."

Morel clanked a little nearer, crouching, drawing back his fist to strike. William put his fist ready. A light came into his blue eyes, almost like a laugh. He watched his father. Another word and the men would have begun to fight. Paul hoped they would. The three children sat pale on the sofa.

"Stop it, both of you," cried Jim. Morel in a hard voice. "We've had enough for our night. And you," she said, turning off to her husband, "look at your children!"

Morel glanced at the sofa.

"Look at the children, you nasty little beast!" he muttered. "Why, what have I done to the children, I should like to know?"

that they're like yourself; you've got 'em up to your own tricks and nasty ways—you've learned 'em in it, you 'ave."

She refused to answer him. No use spoken. After a while he threw his boots under the table and went to bed.

"Why didn't you let me have a go at him?" said William, when his father was asleep. "I could easily have beaten him."

"A nice thing—your own father," she replied.

"Father?" repeated William. "Call him my father?"

"Well, he is—and so—"

"But why don't you let me settle him? I could do, easily."

"The ideal!" she cried. "It hasn't come to that yet."

"No," he said, "it's come to worse. Look at yourself. Why didn't you let me give it him?"

"Because I couldn't bear it, so never think of it," she cried quickly.

And the children went to bed, miserably.

When William was growing up, the family moved from the Bottoms to a house on the brow of the hill, commanding a view of the valley, which spread out like a coarse carpeted ball, or a clump-shall, before it. In front of the house was a huge old ash-tree. The west wind, sweeping from Derbyshire, caught the house with full force, and the tree shook again. Most liked it.

"It's music," he said. "It sends me to sleep."

But Paul and Arthur and Annie hated it. The Paul it became almost a demoniac noise. The winter of their first year in the new house their father was very bad. The children played in the street, on the brink of the wide, dark valley, until eight o'clock. Then they went to bed. Their mother sat sewing below. Having such a great space in front of the house gave the children a feeling of night, of vastness, and of terror. This terror came in from the shrieking of the tree and the sighs of the house disquiet. Often Paul would wake up, after he had been asleep a long time, aware of these discomforts. Instantly he was wide awake. Then he heard the booming shouts of his father, come home nearly drunk, then the sharp replies of his mother, then the bang, bang of his father's fist on the table, and the wary snarling shout as the man's voice got lighter. And then the whole was drowned in a pleasing melody of whistles and cries from the great, wind-swept ash-tree. The children lay silent in suspense, waiting for a lull in the wind to hear what their father was doing. He might hit their mother again. There was a feeling of horror, a kind of bristling in the darkness, and a sense of blood. They lay with their hearts in the grip of an intense suspense. The wind came through the trees faster and faster. All the cords of the great hump hummed, whistled, and

shrieked. And then came the horror of the sudden silence, silence everywhere, outside and downstairs. What was it? Was it a sleep of blood? What had he done?

The children lay and breathed the darkness. And then, at last, they heard their father shove down his legs and sweep upstairs in his stocking feet. Still they listened. There at last, if the wind allowed, they heard the water of the tap drumming into the kettle, which their mother was filling for morning, and they could go to sleep in peace.

So they were happy in the morning—happy, very happy playing, dancing at night round the lovely lamp-post in the midst of the darkness. But they had one slight place of anxiety in their hearts, one darkness in their eyes, which shadowed all their lives.

Paul hated his father. As a boy he had a fervent private religion.

"Make him stop drinking," he prayed every night. "Lord, let my father die," he prayed very often. "Let him not be killed as yet," he prayed when, after tea, the father did not come home from work.

That was another time when the family suffered immensely. The children came from school and had their tea. On the hob the big black crucifixion was burning, the stranger was in the oven, ready for Monday's dinner. He was expected at five o'clock. But for months he would stop and drink every night on his way home from work.

In the winter nights, when it was cold, and grew dark early, Mrs. Morel would put a brass candlestick on the table, light a yellow candle to save the gas. The children finished their food and butter, or dripping, and were ready to go out to play. But if Morel had not come they faltered. The sense of his sitting in all his pit-dirt, drinking, after a long day's work, not coming home and eating and washing, but sitting, getting drunk, on an empty stomach, made Mrs. Morel unable to bear herself. From her the feeling was transmitted to the other children. She never suffered alone any more: the children suffered with her.

Paul went out to play with the men. Down in the great trough of twilight, tiny clusters of lights burned where the pits were. A few last colliers struggled up the dim field-path. The lamplighter came along. No more colliers came. Darkness shut down over the valley; work was gone. It was night.

Thus Paul ran anxiously into the kitchen. The one candle still burned on the table, the big fire glowed red. Mrs. Morel sat alone. On the hob the crucifixion stared: the dinner-plate lay waiting on the table. All the room was full of the sense of waiting, waiting for the man who was sitting in his pit-dirt, drinking, some more

away from home, across the darkness, deluding himself that Paul stood in the doorway.

"Has dad come?" he asked.

"You can see he hasn't," said Mrs. Morel, even with the fall of the question.

Then the boy dived into near his mother. They shared the same anxiety. Presently Mrs. Morel went out and examined the garden.

"They're roiled and black," she said; "but what do I care?"

Not many words were spoken. Paul almost hated his mother for suffering because his father did not come home from work.

"What do you bother yourself for?" he said. "If he wants to stop and get drunk, why don't you let him?"

"Let him!" shouted Mrs. Morel. "You may well say 'let him.'"

She knew that the man who stops on the way home from work is on a quick way to ruining himself and his home. The children were yet young, and depended on the breadwinner. William gave her the sense of relief, providing her at last with someone to turn to if Morel failed. But the same atmosphere of the room on these waking evenings was the same.

The minutes ticked away. At six o'clock still the cloth lay on the table, still the dinner stood waiting, still the same sense of anxiety and expectation in the room. The boy could not stand any longer. He could not go out and play. So he ran in to Mrs. Inger, next door but one, for her to talk to him. She had no children. Her husband was good to her, but was in a shop, and came home late. So, when she saw the lad at the door, she called

"Come in, Paul."

The two sat talking for some time, when suddenly the boy rose saying:

"Well, I'll be going and seeing if my mother wants an errand doing."

He pretended to be perfectly cheerful, and did not tell his friend what ailed him. Then he ran indoors.

Morel at these times came in cheerful and happy.

"This is a nice time to come home," said Mrs. Morel.

"What's it matter to you? what time I come doesn't"

And everybody in the house was still, because he was dangerous. He ate his food in the most brutal manner possible, and when he had done, pushed all the pots in a heap away from him, so lay his arms on the table. Then he went to sleep.

Paul hated his father so. The father's small, mean head, with its black hair slightly roiled with grey, lay on the bare arms, and

the face, dirty and deflated, with a fleshy nose and thin, paley brown, was turned sideways, asleep with hair and weakness and rusty temper. If anyone stirred suddenly, or a noise were made, the man looked up and shouted:

"I'll lay my flat about the y'ead, I'm tellin' there, if the doona stop that clatter! Does hear?"

And the two last words, shouted in a bullying fashion, usually at Annie, made the family writhen with hate of the man.

He was shut out from all family affairs. No one told him anything. The children, alone with their mother, told her all about the day's happenings, everything. Nothing had really taken place in them until it was told to their mother. But as soon as the father came in, everything stopped. He was like the witch in the woods, happy machinery of the house. And he was always aware of this fall of silence on his entry, the shutting off of life, the *unwelcoming*. But now it was gone too far to alter.

He would dearly have liked the children to talk to him, but they could not. Sometimes Mrs. Mowl would say:

"You ought to tell your father."

That was a prize in a competition in a child's paper. Everybody was highly jubilant.

"Now you'd better tell your father when he comes in," said Mrs. Mowl. "You know how he snarls on and says he's never told anything."

"All right," said Paul. But he would almost rather have declined the prize than have to tell his father.

"I've won a prize in a competition, dad," he said.

Mowl turned round to him.

"Have you, my boy? What sort of a competition?"

"Oh, nothing—about famous women."

"And how much is the prize, then, as you've got?"

"It's a book."

"Oh, indeed?"

"About birds."

"How—big?"

And that was all. Conversation was impossible between the father and any other member of the family. He was an outsider. He had denied the God in him.

The only times when he entered again into the life of his own people was when he worked, and was happy at work. Sometimes, in the evening, he cobbled the boots or mended the keds of his pinheads. Then he always wanted several apprentices, and the children enjoyed it. They sat with him in the work, in the actual doing of something, when he was his real self again.

He was a good workman, dexterous, and one who, when he was in a good humor, always sang. He had whole periods, months, almost years, of friction and rusty temper. Then sometimes he was jolly again. It was nice to see him run with a piece of red-fire into the smithery, crying:

"Out of my road—out of my road!"

Then he hammered the soft, red-glowing stuff on his iron anvil, and made the shape he wanted. Or he sat absorbed for a moment, soldering. Then the children watched with joy as the metal work suddenly molten, and was thrown about against the nose of the soldering-iron, while the room was full of a spray of burnt resin and hot tin, and Mord was silent and intent for a minute. He always sang when he mounted bows because of the jolly sound of hammering. And he was rather happy when he sat putting great patches on his molten-iron trousers, which he would often do, considering them too dirty, and the stuff too hard, for his wife to mend.

But the best time for the young children was when he made fuses. Mord fetched a bundle of long, round wheat-straw from the attic. Then he cleaned with his hand, till each one gleamed like a stalk of gold, after which he cut the straws into lengths of about six inches, leaving, if he could, a notch at the bottom of each piece. He always had a beautifully sharp knife that could cut a straw clean without hurting it. Then he sat in the middle of the table a heap of gunpowder, a little pile of black gelatin upon the white-clothed board. He made and trimmed the straws while Paul and Annie filled and plugged them. Paul loved to see the black gelatin trickle down a crack in his palm into the mouth of the straw, peppering jolly downwards till the straw was full. Then he lugged up the mouth with a bit of soap—which he got on his thumb-nail from a put in a tinnet—and the straw was finished.

"Look, dad!" he said.

"That's right, my beauty," replied Mord, who was peculiarly lavish of endearments to his second son. Paul popped the fuse into the powder-tin, ready for the morning, when Mord would take it to the pit, and use it to fire a shot that would blast the coal down.

Mrs. Jane Arthur, still fond of his father, would lean on the arm of Mord's chair, and say:

"Tell us about down pit, daddy."

This Mord loved to do.

"Well, there's one little 'oon—we call 'im 'Daddy,' he would begin. "As' he's a heavy one."

Mord had a weird way of telling a story. He made one feel Taffy's counting.

"He's a brown one," he would declare, "an' not very high. Will he come? He's still wif a castle, an' does yo' 'ear 'im count."

"'Ella, Taff,' you say, 'what art meanin' by? He's to 'bin' some stuff?"

"An' 't mean again. Then he shoves up an' shoves 'is 'ead on yo, that cad!"

"'What's went, Taff?' yo' say."

"And what does he?" Arthur always asked.

"He wants a bit o' bacon, my duckery."

This story of Taffy would go on interminably, and everybody loved it.

On occasions it was a new tale.

"An' what does think, my darlin'?" When I want to put my coat on at nap-time, what should go wrong? up my arm but a minute.

"'Hoy up, there!" "I shooa."

"An' I was fast in time too get 'em by th' tail."

"And did you kill it?"

"I did, for they're a nuisance. The place is full wif 'em."

"An' what do they live on?"

"The corn an' the 'case drops—an' they'll get in your pocket an' eat your soap, if you'll let 'em—no matter where yo' hang your coat—the shirts, niftin's little nuisances, for they are."

These happy evenings could not take place unless Mord had some job to do. And then he always went to bed very early, often before the children. There was nothing consoling for him to stay up late, when he had finished delivering, and had delivered the headlines of the newspaper.

And the children felt secure when their father was in bed. They lay and talked softly awhile. Then they started as the lights went suddenly spreading over the ceiling from the lamps that swung in the hands of the rediers tramping by outside, going to take the nine o'clock shift. They listened to the voices of the men, imagined them dipping down into the dark valley. Sometimes they went to the window and watched the three or four lamps growing fonder and closer, sweeping down the fields in the darkness. Then it was a joy to rush back to bed and cuddle closely in the warmth.

Paul was rather a delicate boy, subject to bronchitis. The others were all quite strong; so this was another reason for his mother's difference in feeling for him. One day he came home at dinner-time feeling ill. But it was not a fluency to make any fuss.

"'What's the matter with you?" his mother asked sharply.

"Nothing," he replied.

But he ate no dinner.

"If you eat no dinner, you're not going to school," she said.

"Why?" he asked.

"That's why."

So after dinner he lay down on the sofa, on the warm chairs outside the children loved. Then he fell into a kind of sleep. That afternoon Mrs. Moor was ironing. She listened to the small, restless noise the boy made in his throat, as she worked. Again rose in her heart the old, almost weary feeling towards him. She had never expected him to live. And yet he had a great vitality in his young body. Perhaps it would have been a little relief to her if he had died. She always felt a mixture of anguish in her love for him.

He, in his semi-conscious sleep, was vaguely aware of the clatter of the iron on the iron-board, of the faint cluck, cluck on the ironing-board. Once roused, he opened his eyes to see his mother standing on the hearthrug with the hot iron near her cheek, listening, as it were, to the hearth. Her still face, with the mouth closed tight from suffering and distillation and self-denial, and her eyes the quietest his on one side, and her blue eyes as young, quick, and warm, made his heart contract with love. When she was quiet, so, she looked brave and rich with life, but as if she had been come out of her rights. It hurt the boy badly, this feeling about her that she had never had her life's fulfilment; and his own incapability to make up to her heart him with a sense of impotence, yet made him patiently dogged inside. It was his childish sin.

She sat on the iron, and a little ball of spit bounced, round off the dark, glossy surface. Then, lovingly, she rubbed the iron on the sack lining of the hearthrug vigorously. She was warm in the roddy twilight. Paul loved the way she crouched and put her head on one side. Her movements were light and quick. It was always a pleasure to watch her. Nothing she ever did, no movements she ever made, could have been found fault with by her children. The room was warm and full of the scent of her linen. Later on the dayman came and talked softly with her.

Paul was laid up with an attack of measles. He did not mind much. What happened happened, and it was no good blinking against the prickles. He loved the evenings, after eight o'clock, when the light was put out, and he could watch the fire-flames spring over the darkness of the walls and ceiling; could watch huge shadows waving and tossing, till the room seemed full of men who battled silently.

On rising to bed, the father would come into the sick-room.

He was always very gentle if anyone were ill. But he disturbed the atmosphere for the boy.

"Are we asleep, my darling?" Mabel asked softly.

"No, is my mother coming?"

"She's just finishing' little' the dishes. Do you want anything?" Mabel asked. "There'd" his son.

"I don't want nothing. But how long will she be?"

"Not long, my darling."

The father walked undecidedly on the hearthrug for a moment or two. He felt his son did not want him. Then he went to the top of the stairs and said to his wife:

"This child's aint' for sleep; how long art you' to be?"

"Until I've finished, good gracious! Tell him to go to sleep."

"She says you're to go to sleep," the father repeated gently to Paul.

"Well, I want her to come," insisted the boy.

"She says he can't go off till you come," Mabel called downstairs.

"Oh, dear! I shan't be long. And do stop shouting downstairs. There's the other children——"

Then Mabel came again, and crouched before the bed-room fire. He loved a fire dearly.

"She says she won't be long," he said.

He listened about indefinitely. The boy began to get frowish with irritation. His father's presence seemed to aggravate all his sick impatience. At last Mabel, after having stood looking at his tiny writhes, said softly:

"Good-night, my darling."

"Good-night," Paul replied, turning round in relief to be alone.

Paul loved to sleep with his mother. Sleep is still most perfect, in spite of hygienists, when it is shared with a beloved. The warmth, the security and peace of soul, the utter comfort from the touch of the other, before the sleep, so that it takes the body and soul completely in its holding. Paul lay against her and slept, and got better; whilst she, always a fast sleeper, fell later on into a profound sleep that seemed to give her faith.

In consciousness he would sit up in bed, see the fluffy horses feeding at the troughs in the field, watching their hay on the golden yellow snow; watch the mince mong bones—small, black figures trailing slowly in gangs across the white field. Then the night came up in dark blue vapour from the snow.

In consciousness everything was wonderful. The snowflakes, suddenly arising on the window-pane, clung there a moment like peacocks, then were gone, and a drop of water was crawling

down the glass. The snowflakes whirled round the corner of the house, like pigeons dashing by. Across across the valley the little black train crept doubtfully over the great whiteness.

While they were so poor, the children were delighted if they could do anything to help economically. Annie and Paul and Arthur went out early in the morning, in summer, looking for mushrooms, turning through the wet grass, from which the larks were rising, for the white-skinned, wonderful raised bodies crouched secretly in the grass. And if they got half a pound they felt exceedingly happy: there was the joy of finding something, the joy of accepting something straight from the hand of Nature, and the joy of contributing to the family exchequer.

But the most important harvest, after gleaming for its maturity, was the blackberry. Mrs. Morel went berry fruit for puddings on the Sundays; also the dried blackberries. So Paul and Arthur roamed the coppices and woods and old quarries, so long as a blackberry was to be found, every week-end going on their search. In that region of mining villages blackberries became a comparative rarity. But Paul hunted far and wide. He loved being out in the country, among the bushes. But he also could not bear to go home to his mother empty. That, he felt, would disappoint her, and he would have died rather.

"Good gracious!" she would exclaim as the lads came in, late, and tired to death, and hungry, "wherever have you been?"

"Well," replied Paul, "there wasn't any, so we went over Mill Hill to. And look here, our mother!"

She peeped into the basket.

"Now, there are five over!" she exclaimed.

"And there's over two pounds—ain't there over two pounds?"

She tried the basket.

"Yes," she answered doubtfully.

Then Paul fished out a little sprig. He always brought her one sprig, the best he could find.

"Fussy!" she said, in a casual tone, of a woman accepting a love-token.

The boy walked all day, west miles and miles, rather than own himself beaten and come home to her empty-handed. She never recalled this, while he was young. She was a woman who waited for her children to grow up. And William occupied her chiefly.

But when William went to Nottingham, and was not so much at home, the mother made a companion of Paul. The latter was unconsciously jealous of his brother, and William was jealous of him. At the same time, they were good friends.

THE YOUNG LIFE OF PAUL

Mrs. More's intimacy with her second son was more subtle and fine, perhaps not so passionate as with her eldest. It was the rule that Paul should fetch the money on Friday afternoons. The salaries of the five pits were paid on Fridays, but not individually. All the earnings of each stall were put down in the chief book, as contractor, and he divided the wages again, either in the public-house or in his own home. So that the children could fetch the money, school closed early on Friday afternoons. Each of the More children—William then Annie, then Paul—had fetched the money on Friday afternoons, until they were themselves to work. Paul used to set off at half-past three, with a black-cotton bag in his pocket. Down all the paths, women, girls, children, and men were seen trooping to the office.

Three offices were quite handsome: a new, red-brick building, almost like a mansion, standing in its own well-kept grounds at the end of Greenhill Lane. The waiting-room was the hall, a long, bare room paved with blue brick, and having a seat all round, against the wall. Here sat the colliers in their giddies. They had come up early. The women and children usually loitered about on the red gravel paths. Paul always examined the grass border, and the big grass bank, because in it grew tiny pansies and they forget-me-nots. There was a sound of many voices. The women had on their Sunday hats. The girls chattered loudly. Little dogs ran here and there. The green shrubs were almost all around.

Then from inside came the cry "Spiney Park—Spiney Park." All the folk for Spiney Park trooped inside. When it was time for Barry to be paid, Paul went in among the crowd. The pay-room was quite small. A counter went across, dividing it into two. Behind the counter stood two men—Mr. Bradshaw and his clerk, Mr. Winterbottom. Mr. Bradshaw was large, somewhat of the same patriarch in appearance, having a rather thin white beard. He was usually muffled in an enormous silk necktie, and right up to the hot summer a huge fire burned in the open grate. His window was open. Sometimes in winter the air scorched the throats of the people, coming in from the firebrass. Mr. Winterbottom was rather small and fat, and very bald. He made remarks that were not witty, while his chief launched forth patriarchal admonitions against the colliers.

The room was crowded with miners in their giddies, men who had been home and changed, and women, and one or two children, and usually a dog. Paul was quite small, so it was often his fate to be jammed behind the legs of the men, near the fire which scorched him. He knew the order of the room—they went according to stall number.

"Holiday," came the ringing voice of Mr. Brathwaite. Then Mrs. Holiday stepped silently forward, was paid, drew aside.

"Bower—John Bower."

A boy stepped to the counter. Mr. Brathwaite, large and insectile, glowered at him over his spectacles.

"John Bower!" he repeated.

"It's not," said the boy.

"Why, you need to 'ave a different name than that," said glumly Mr. Winterbottom, peering over the counter. The people stood, thinking of John Bower senior.

"How is it your father's not come?" said Mr. Brathwaite, in a large and nasal, paternal voice.

"He's badly," piped the boy.

"You should tell him to keep off the drink," pronounced the great cashier.

"No" silver cried if he puts his iron through yer," said a mocking voice from behind.

All the men laughed. The large and important cashier looked down at his next door.

"Fred Fitzingus!" he called, quite indifferently.

Mr. Brathwaite was an important shareholder in the firm.

Paul knew his turn was next but one, and his heart began to beat. He was pushed against the chimney-piece. His calves were burning. But he did not hope to get through the wall of men.

"Walter Morel!" came the ringing voice.

"Here!" piped Paul, small and insignificant.

"Morel—Walter Morel!" the cashier repeated, his finger and thumb on the lever, ready to pass on.

Paul was suffering convulsions of self-consciousness, and could not or would not move. The backs of the men obliterated him. Then Mr. Winterbottom came to the rescue.

"He's here. Where is he? Morel's he?"

The fat, red, bald little man peered round with keen eyes. He pointed at the fireplace. The cashier looked round, moved aside, and disclosed the boy.

"Here he is!" said Mr. Winterbottom.

Paul went to the counter.

"Seventeen pounds eleven and fivepence. Why don't you shout up what you've called?" said Mr. Brathwaite. He banged on to the invoice a five-pound bag of silver, then, in a delicate and pretty movement, picked up a little ten-pound column of gold, and plumped it beside the silver. The gold slid in a bright stream over the paper. The cashier finished counting off the money; the

boy dragged the shade down the counter to Mr. Winterbottom, in whom the riddage for rent and tolls must be paid. Here he suffered again.

"Staters an' sibs," said Mr. Winterbottom.

The lad was too much upset to count. He pushed forward some loose silver and had a sovereign.

"How much do you think you've given me?" asked Mr. Winterbottom.

The boy looked at him, but said nothing. He had not the faintest notion.

"Haven't you got a tongue in your head?"

Paul hit his lip, and pushed forward some more silver.

"Don't they teach you to count at the Board-school?" he asked.

"Never by Albigens an' French," said a collier.

"An' chucks an' impudence," said another.

Paul was keeping someone waiting. With trembling fingers he got his money into the bag and slid out. He suffered the tortures of the damned on these occasions.

His sister, when he got outside, and was walking along the Mansfield Road, was invisible. On the park wall the roses were green. There were some gold and some white birds pecking under the apple-trees of an orchard. The colliers were walking home in a stream. The boy went near the wall self-consciously. He knew many of the men, but could not recognise them in their dirt. And this was a new torture to him.

When he got down to the New Inn, at Breity, his father was not yet come. Mrs. Wharnaby, the landlady, knew him. His grandmother, Morel's mother, had been Mrs. Wharnaby's friend.

"Your father's not come yet," said the landlady, in the peculiar half-sneering, half-patronising tones of a woman who talks chiefly to grown men. "Sit you down."

Paul sat down on the edge of the bench in the bar. Some colliers were "rehearsing"—staring out their money—in a corner; others came in. They all glanced at the boy without speaking. As two Morels came: brick, and with something of an air, even in his blackness.

"Hello!" he said rather tenderly to his son. "Have you heated me? Shall you have a drink of something?"

Paul and all the children were bred up *strict* anti-alcoholists, and would have suffered more in drinking a lemonade before all the men than in having a tooth drawn.

"The landlady looked at him *de haut en bas*, rather pitying, and at the same time, regarding his dirt, *strict* morality. Paul went home, glowing. He entered the house cheerily. Friday was

haking day, and there was usually a hot bath. His mother put it before him.

Suddenly he turned on her in a fury, his eyes flashing:

"I'm not going to the office any more," he said.

"Why, what's the matter?" his mother asked in surprise. His sudden rage rather amazed her.

"I'm not going any more," he declared.

"Oh, very well, tell your father so."

He closed his door as if he hated it.

"I'm not—I'm not going to fetch the money."

"Then one of Charlie's children can go; they'd be glad enough of the money," said Mrs. Morel.

This suggestion was Paul's only income. It nearly went in buying birthday presents; but it was an income, and he resented it. But—

"They can have it, then!" he said. "I don't want it."

"Oh, very well," said his mother. "But you needn't bully me about it."

"They're hateful, and common, and hateful, they are, and I'm not going any more. Mr. Bruthwaite drops his 'N's, and Mr. Winterbottom says 'You was'."

"And is that why you won't go any more?" smiled Mrs. Morel.

The boy was silent for some time. His face was pale, his eyes dark and furious. His mother moved about at her work, taking no notice of him.

"They always stand in front of me, so I can't get out," he said.

"Well, my lad, you've only to ask them," she replied.

"An' then Alfred Winterbottom says, 'What do they teach you at the Board-school?'"

"They never taught him much," said Mrs. Morel, "that it is a fact—nothing manners nor wit—and his cunning he was born with."

So, in her own way, she scolded him. His ridiculous hypersensitiveness made her heart ache. And sometimes the fury of his eyes roused her, made her sleeping soul lift up its head a moment, surprised.

"What was the cheque?" she asked.

"Seventeen pounds eleven and fivepence, and sixteen and six pence," replied the boy. "It's a good week; and only five shillings pence for my father."

So she was able to calculate how much her husband had earned, and could tell him to account if he gave her short money. Morel always kept to himself the secret of the week's amount.

Friday was the baking night and market night. It was the rule

that Paul should stay at home and bake. He loved to stop it and draw or read; he was very fond of drawing. Annie always "gallanted" on Friday nights; Arthur was enjoying himself as usual. So the boy remained alone.

Mrs. Mord loved her marketing. In the busy market-place on the top of the hill, where four roads, from Nottingham and Darby, Ilkeston and Mansfield, meet, many stalls were erected. Buses ran in from surrounding villages. The market-place was full of women, the streets packed with men. It was amusing to see so many men conspicuous in the streets. Mrs. Mord usually quarrelled with her two women, sympathized with her frail man—who was a glibby, but his wife was a bad un-laughed-with old fish man—who was a scamp but so droll—but the fishman man in his place, was cold with the odd-ways man, and only went to the cookery man when she was driven—or driven by the cornflower as a little dish: then she was coldly polite.

"I wondered how much that little dish was," she said.

"Seven pence to you."

"Thank-you."

She put the dish down and walked away; but she could not leave the market-place without it. Again she went by where the pot was coldly on the floor, and she glanced at the dish furtively, pretending not to.

She was a little woman, in a brown and a black costume. Her bonnet was in its third year; it was a great grievance to Annie.

"Mother!" the girl implored, "don't wear that rubbishy little bonnet."

"Then what else shall I wear," replied the mother tartly. "And I'm sure it's right enough."

It had started with a tip; then had had flowers: now was reduced to black lace and a bit of jet.

"It looks rather come-down," said Paul. "Couldn't you give it a pick-up-up?"

"I'll jowl your head for impudence," said Mrs. Mord, and she did the strings of the black bonnet villainously under her chin.

She glanced at the dish again. Both she and her man, the pot man, had an uncomfortable feeling, as if there were something between them. Suddenly he shouted:

"Do you want it for fivepence?"

She started. Her heart hardened; but then she stooped and took up her dish.

"I'll have it," she said.

"You'll do me the favour, like?" he said. "You'd better spit in it, like you do when y'are something give you."

Mrs. Morel paid him the divergence in a cold manner.

"I don't see you give it me," she said. "You wouldn't let me have it for divergence if you didn't want to."

"In this fashion, scrapper! place you may count yourself lucky if you can give your things away," he growled.

"Yes, there are bad times, and good," said Mrs. Morel.

But she had forgiven the pot man. They were friends. She dare now finger his pots. So she was happy.

Paul was waiting for her. He loved her home-coming. She was always her best as—triumphant, dressed, laden with parcels, feeling rich in spirit. He heard her quick, light step in the entry and looked up from his drawing.

"Oh!" she sighed, smiling at him from the doorway.

"My,—well, you are loaded!" he exclaimed, putting down his brush.

"I am!" she gasped. "That brown Annie said she'd meet me. Look a weight!"

She dropped her string bag and her packages on the table.

"Is the food done?" she asked, going to the oven.

"The hot one is cooking," he replied. "You needn't look, I've not forgotten it."

"Oh, that pot man!" she said, closing the oven door. "You know what a wretch I've said he was? Well, I don't think he's quite so bad."

"Don't you?"

The boy was attentive to her. She took off her little black bonnet.

"No. I think he can't make any money—well, it's everybody's cry alike nowadays—and it makes him disagreeable."

"It would me," said Paul.

"Well, one can't wonder at it. And he let me have—how much do you think he let me have do? for?"

She took the dish out of its rag of newspaper, and stood looking at it with joy.

"Show me!" said Paul.

The two stood together gazing over the dish.

"I see confirmation on things," said Paul.

"Yes, and I thought of the magnet you bought me——"

"One and three," said Paul.

"Threepence!"

"It's not enough, mother."

"No. Do you know, I fairly melted off with it. But I'd been extravagant, I couldn't afford any more. And he needn't have let me have it if he hadn't wanted to."

"No, he needs'n, need he," said Paul, and the two comforted each other from the fear of having robbed the poor man.

"We c'n have sweeted fruit in it," said Paul.

"Or custard, or a jelly," said his mother.

"Or molasses and butter," said he.

"Don't forget that bread," she said, her voice bright with glee.

Paul looked in the oven; tapped the loaf on the tumb.

"It's done," he said, giving it to her.

She tapped it also.

"Yes," she replied, going to unpack her bag. "Oh, and I'm a wicked, extravagant woman. I know I c'n come to want."

He slipped to her side eagerly, to see her latest extravagance. She unfolded another lump of newspaper and disclosed some sort of paviour and of extreme dainties.

"Four penn'orth!" she exclaimed.

"How cheap!" he said.

"Yes, but I couldn't afford it the week of all week."

"But lovely!" he said.

"Aren't they!" she exclaimed, giving way to pure joy. "Paul, look at this yellow one, isn't it—well a face just like an old man!"

"Just!" cried Paul, stooping to sniff. "And smells that nice! But isn't a bit splashed."

He ran to the scullery, came back with the flannel, and carefully washed the paviour.

"Now look at *this* now he's well!" he said.

"Yes!" she exclaimed, bristled of satisfaction.

The children of Beaufit Street felt quite silent. At the end where the Martins lived there were not many young things. So the few were more united. Boys and girls played together, the girls joining in the fights and the rough games, the boys taking part in the dancing games and rings and make-belief of the girls.

Annie and Paul and Arthur loved the winter evenings, when it was not wet. They stayed indoors till the colliers were all gone home, till it was thick dark, and the storm would be deserted. Then they tied their marten round their necks, for they scorned overcoats, as all the colliers' children did, and went out. The entry was very dark, and at the end the whole great night opened out, in a hollow, with a little tangle of hedges below where Martin's pit lay, and another far away opposite for Selby. The farthest tiny lights seemed to stretch out the darkness before them. The children looked anxiously down the road at the one lump-post, which stood at the end of the field path. If the little, luminous space were deserted, the two boys felt greater desolation. They stood with their hands in their pockets under the lamp, turning their backs

on the night, quite remarkable, watching the dark houses. Suddenly a pinelene under a short coat was seen, and a long-legged girl came flying up.

"Where's Billy Peltus and your Auntie and Eddie Dabbs?"

"I don't know."

But it did not matter so much—there were three now. They set up a game round the lamp-post, till the others rushed up, yelling. Then the play went dark and featureless.

There was only this one lamp-post. Behind was the great sweep of darkness, as if all the night were there. In front, another white, dark way opened over the hill house. Occasionally somebody came out of this way and went into the field down the path. In a dozen yards thoughts had swallowed days. The children played on.

They were brought exceedingly close together owing to their isolation. If a quarrel took place, the whole play was spoilt. Arthur was very touchy, and Billy Peltus—really Felipe—was worse. Then Paul had to side with Arthur, and on Paul's side went Alice, while Billy Peltus always had Emma Limb and Eddie Dabbs to back him up. Then the six would fight, hate with a fury of hatred, and then horror in terror. Paul never forgot, after one of these fierce interminable fights, seeing a big red moon lift itself up, slowly, between the wheat road over the hill-top, steadily, like a giant back. And he thought of the Bible, that the moon should be turned to blood. And the next day he made haste to be friends with Billy Peltus. And then the wild, intense games went on again under the lamp-post, surrounded by so much darkness. Mrs. Mabel, going into her parlour, would hear the children singing away:

"My shoes are made of Spanish leather,
My socks are made of silk;
I wear a ring on every finger,
I wash myself in milk."

They minded so perfectly absorbed in the game as their voices came out of the night, that they had the feel of wild creatures singing. It stirred the mother; and she understood when they came in at eight o'clock, rosy, with brilliant eyes, and quick, passionate speech.

They all loved the beautiful Street house for its openness, for the great outlook of the world it had in view. On summer evenings the women would stand against the field fence, gazing, feeling the wear, watching the sunset flare quickly out, till the Derbyshire hills ridged across the horizon far away, like the black combs of a town.

In this summer season the pits never turned full size, particularly the soft coal. Mrs. Dalia, who lived next door to Mrs. Mord, going to the fifth floor to shake her hearth-rug, would spy men coming slowly up the hill. She saw as many as they were colliers. Then she waited, a tall, thin, shrew-faced woman, standing on the hill below, almost like a statue to the pale colliers who were rolling up. It was only eleven o'clock. From the far-off wooded hills the haze that hangs like fine black crops at the back of a summer morning had not yet dissipated. The first man came to the stile. "Check-check!" were the gasp under his throat.

"What, han' yer knacker off?" cried Mrs. Dalia.

"We han, miss."

"It's a pity as they lett yer goo," she said anxiously.

"It is that," replied the man.

"Nay, you know you're fig to come up again," she said.

And the man went on. Mrs. Dalia, going up her yard, spied Mrs. Mord taking the ashes to the ash-pit.

"I reckon Mince's knackered off, miss," she cried.

"Isn't it devious?" exclaimed Mrs. Mord in wrath.

"Ha! But I'm just good Jont Hurchby."

"They might as well have axed their shoe-leather," said Mrs. Mord. And both women went indoors disgraced.

The colliers, their faces scarcely blackened, were sweeping home again. Mord hated to go back. He loved the sunny morning. But he had gone to pit to work, and so he went home again upon his trumper.

"Good gracious, at this time!" exclaimed his wife, as he entered.

"Can I help it, woman?" he shouted.

"And I've ate done half enough dinner."

"Then I'll eat my bit o' scrap as I took with me," he howled pathetically. He felt ignominious and sore.

And the children, coming home from school, would wonder to see their father eating with his dinner the two thick slices of rather dry and dirty bread and butter that had been to pit and back.

"What's say did eating his scrap for now?" asked Arthur.

"I should ha'e it halled as me if I deius," asserted Mord.

"What a story!" exclaimed his wife.

"An' it is gile' as he wanted?" said Mord. "I'm not such an extravagant man as you lot, with your waste. If I deep a bit of bread as pit, is all the dust an' dirt, I pick it up an' eat it."

"The police would eat it," said Paul. "It wouldn't be wasted."

"Good bread an' butter's not for mice, either," said Mord.

"Dirty or not dirty, I'd eat it rather than it should be wasted."

"You might have it for the sale and pay for it out of your own pin," said Mrs. Morel.

"Oh, might I?" he exclaimed.

They were very poor that winter. William had just gone away to London, and his mother missed his money. He sent ten shillings once or twice, but he had many things to pay for at first. His letters came regularly once a week. He wrote a good deal to his mother, telling her all his life, how he made friends, and was exchanging lessons with a Frenchman, how he enjoyed London. His mother felt again he was remaining to her just as when he was at home. She wrote to him every week her direct, rather witty letters. All day long, as she cleaned the house, she thought of him. He was in London: he would do well. At last, he was like her knight who gave her favour in the battle.

He was coming at Christmas for five days. There had never been such preparations. Paul and Arthur covered the land for holly and evergreens. Annie made the pretty paper hoops in the old-fashioned way. And there was a kind of extravagance in the larder. Mrs. Morel made a big and magnificent cake. Then, feeling quickly, she showed Paul how to blanch almonds. He shined the long table reverently, counting them all, to see not one was lost. It was said that eggs whitened better in a cold place. So she lay wood in the scullery, where the temperature was nearly at freezing-point, and whisked and whisked, and flew in excitement to his mother as the white of egg gave stiff and massy snow.

"Just look, mother! Isn't it lovely?"

And he balanced a bit on his toes, then blew it in the air.

"Now, don't waste it," said the mother.

Everybody was glad with excitement. William was coming on Christmas Eve. Mrs. Morel surveyed her pantry. There was a big plum cake, and a rice cake, jam tarts, lemon tarts, and mince-plain—two enormous dishes. She was folding cooking—Spanish tarts and cheese-tarts. Everywhere was decorated. The dining-lunch of bearded butty hung with bright and glowering things, upon slowly does Mrs. Morel's head as she tremed her little man in the kitchen. A great fire roared. There was a scent of cooked pastry. He was due at seven o'clock, but he would be late. The three children had gone to meet him. She was alone. But at a quarter to seven Morel came in again. Neither with nor husband spoke. He sat in his armchair, quite awkward with excitement, and she quietly went on with her baking. Only by the careful way in which she did things could it be told how much moved she was. The clock ticked on.

"What time does my heli coming?" Mabel asked for the fifth time.

"The train gets in at halfpast six," she replied emphatically.

"Then he'll be here at ten past seven."

"Oh, bless you, it'll be hours late on the Midland," she said indifferently. But she hoped, by expecting him late as being him early. Mabel went down the entry to look for him. Then he came back.

"Goodness, wait!" she said. "You're like an ill-acting hen."

"Hurry you better be getting him running if not ready!" said the fishes.

"There's plenty of time," she answered.

"There's not so much as I can see to," he answered, leaning crossly in his chair. She began to clear her table. The kettle was singing. They waited and waited.

Meanwhile the three children were on the platform at Satchley Bridge, on the Midland main line, two miles from home. They waited one hour. A train came—he was not there. Down the line the red and green lights shone. It was very dark and very cold.

"Ask him if the London train's come," said Paul to Annie, when they saw the man in a dip cap.

"I've got," said Annie. "You be quiet—he might stand us off."

But Paul was dying for the man to know they were expecting someone by the London train: it sounded so grand. Yet he was much too much scared of troubling any man, let alone one in a peaked cap, to dare to ask. The three children could scarcely go into the waiting-room for fear of being sent away, and for fear something should happen while they were off the platform. Still they waited in the dark and cold.

"It's an hour and a half late," said Arthur pathetically.

"Well," said Annie, "it's Christmas Eve."

They all grow silent. He wasn't coming. They looked down the darkness of the railway. There was London! It seemed the uttermost of distance. They thought anything might happen if one came from London. They were all too troubled to talk. Cold, and unhappy, and silent, they huddled together on the platform.

At last, after more than two hours, they saw the lights of an engine peering round, away down the darkness. A porter ran out. The children drew back with beating hearts. A great train bound for Manchester, drew up. Two doors opened, and from one of them, William. They flew to him. He handed parcels to them cheerily, and immediately began to explain that this great train

had stopped for his sake at such a small station as Tordley Bridge; it was not booked to stop.

Meanwhile the parents were getting anxious. The table was set, the chop was cooked, everything was ready. Mrs. Mordl put on her black apron. She was waiting for her best dress. Then she sat, pretending to read. The minutes were a torture to her.

"Hush!" said Mordl. "It's an hour or a half."

"And those children waiting!" she said.

"The train can't be' come in yet," he said.

"I tell you, as Christmas Eve they're *dear* wrong."

They were both a bit cross with each other, as growned with anxiety. The air-oven roared outside in a cold, raw wind. And all that space of night from London heard Mrs. Mordl suffered. The slight click of the works inside the clock irritated her. It was getting so late; it was getting unbearable.

At last there was a sound of voices, and a footstep in the entry.

"He's here!" cried Mordl, jumping up.

Then he stood back. The mother ran a few steps towards the door and waited. There was a rush and a patter of feet, the door burst open. William was there. He dropped his Gladstone bag and took his mother in his arms.

"Mum!" he said.

"My boy!" she cried.

And for two seconds, no longer, she clasped him and kissed him. Then she withdrew and said, trying to be quite normal:

"But how late you are!"

"Aren't I?" he cried, turning to his father. "Well, dad?"

The two men shook hands.

"Well, my lad!"

Mordl's eyes were wet.

"We thought she'd never be coming!", he said.

"Oh, I'll come!" exclaimed William.

Then the son turned round to his mother.

"But you look well," she said proudly, laughing.

"Well!" he exclaimed. "I should think so—coming home!"

He was a fine fellow, big, straight, and fearless-looking. He looked round at the evergreens and the living hurch, and the little table that lay in their line on the hearth.

"By Jove! mother, it's not different!" he said, as if in relief.

Everybody was still for a second. Then he suddenly sprang forward, picked a tart from the hurch, and pushed it whole into his mouth.

"Well, did I see you eat such a parish oven!" the father exclaimed.

He had brought them endless presents. Every penny he had he had spent on them. There was a sense of luxury overflowing in the house. For his mother there was an umbrella with gold on the pale handle. She kept it to her dying day, and would have lost anything rather than that. Everybody had something gorgeous, and besides, there were pounds of unknown wares: Turkish delights, crystallized pineapple, and such-like things which, the children thought, only the splendour of London could provide. And Paul boasted of these treats among his friends.

"Real pineapple, cut off in slices, and then turned into crystal—did you?"

Everybody was read with happiness in the family. Home was home, and they loved it with a passion of love, whatever the suffering had been. There were parties, there were rejoicings. People came in to see William, to see what difference London had made to him. And they all found him "such a gentleman, and such a fine fellow, my word!"

When he went away again the children retired to various places to weep alone. Mabel went so bad in misery, and then Mabel hit as if she were maimed by some drug, as if her feelings were paralyzed. She loved him passionately.

He was in the office of a lawyer connected with a large shipping firm, and at the instance his chief offered him a trip to the Mediterranean on one of the boats, for quite a small voyage. Mrs. Mabel wrote: "Oh, go, my boy. You may never have a chance again, and I should love to think of you cruising there in the Mediterranean about better than to have you at home." But William came home for his fortnight's holiday. Not even the Mediterranean, which pulled at all his young man's desires to travel, and at his poor man's wonder at the glamorous south, could take him away when he might come home. That compensated his mother for much.

Paul Launched into Life

Mrs. Meehl was rather a headless man, capable of danger. So he had restless accidents. Now, when Mrs. Meehl heard the rattle of an empty coal-cart come at her entry-end, she ran into the parlour to look, expecting almost to see her husband seated in the wicker, his face grey under his dirt, his body limp and sick with some hurt or ache. If it were he, she would run out to help.

About a year after William went to London, and just after Paul had left school, before he got work, Mrs. Meehl was upstairs and her son was painting in the kitchen—he was very clever with his hands—when there came a knock at the door. Quickly he put down his brush to go. At the same moment his mother opened a window upstairs and looked down.

A postman in his dirt stood on the threshold.

"Is this Walter Meehl's?" he asked.

"Yes," said Mrs. Meehl. "What is it?"

But she had guessed already.

"Your mother's got hurt," he said.

"Oh, dear me!" she exclaimed. "It's a wonder if he hadn't, lad. And what's he done this time?"

"I don't know for sure, but it's 'a big somewhere. They 'a'bin' 'em ter th' 'spital."

"Good goodness me!" she exclaimed. "Oh, dear, what a one he is! There's not five minutes of peace, I'll be hanged if there is! His shoulder's steady better, and now—— Did you see him?"

"I seed him at th' bottom. As' I seed 'em bring 'im up in a tub, an' 'e wor in a dead faint. But he shouted like anythink when Doctor Foster examined him if th' lump wakin'—an' moved an' sworn, an' said an 'e wor gain' to be ta'en whome—'e won't gain' ter th' 'spital."

The boy filtered to an end.

"He said want to come home, so that I can have all the bodies. Thank you, my lad. Oh, dear, if I'm not sick—sick and rickited, I am!"

She came downstairs. Paul had mechanically resumed his painting.

"And it must be pretty bad if they've taken him to the hospital,"

she went on. "But what a splendid creature he is! Other men don't have all these accidents. Yes, he would want to put all the burden on me. Eh, dear, just as we were getting over a bit at last. For those things away, there's no time to be painting now. What time is there a train? I know I'll have to go trailing to Kanton. I'll have to leave that bedroom."

"I can finish it," said Paul.

"You needn't. I shall catch the seven o'clock back, I should think. Oh, my blessed legs, the fun and commotion he'll make! And those granite sets at Tinner Hill—he might well call them kidney potatoes—they'll jolt him almost to bits. I wonder why they can't mend them, the more they're in, and all the men as go across in that ambulance. You'd think they'd have a hospital here. The men bought the ground, and, my dear, there'd be accidents enough to keep it going. But no, they must wait there ten miles in a slow ambulance to Nottingham. It's a crying shame! Oh, and the fun he'll make! I know he will! I wonder what's with him. Ruston, I'd think. Poor beggar, he'll wish himself anywhere rather. But he'll look after him, I know. Now there's no telling how long he'll be stuck in that hospital—and won't he hate it! But if it's only his leg it's not so bad."

All the time she was getting ready. Flustered, taking off her bodice, she crouched at the boiler while the water ran slowly into her bedchamber.

"I wish this boiler was at the bottom of the sea!" she exclaimed, wriggling the handle impatiently. She had very handsome, strong arms, rather surprising on a smallish woman.

Paul cleared away, put on the kettle, and set the table.

"There isn't a train till four-ten," he said. "You've time enough."

"Oh no I haven't!" she cried, blinking at him over the towel as she wiped her face.

"You must have. You must drink a cup of tea at any rate. Should I come with you to Kanton?"

"Come with me? What for, I should like to know? Now, what have I to take him? Eh, dear! His clean shirt—and it's a blessing it is clean. But it had better be altered. And stockings—he won't want them—and a towel, I suppose; and handkerchiefs. Now what else?"

"A comb, a knife and fork and spoon," said Paul. His father had been in hospital before.

"Goodness knows what sort of state his feet were in," continued Mrs. May, as she smoothed her long brown hair, that was fine as silk, and was touched now with grey. "He's very particular to

wash himself to the water, but before he thinks doesn't matter. But there, I suppose they are plenty like it."

Paul had laid the table. He set his mother out or two pieces of very thin bread and butter.

"Here you are," he said, putting her cup of tea in her place.

"I can't be bothered!" she exclaimed crossly.

"Well, you've got to, so there, now it's put out ready," he insisted.

So she sat down and sipped her tea, and sat a little, in silence. She was thinking.

In a few minutes she was gone, to walk the two and a half miles to Keston Station. All the things she was taking him she had in her bulging sacking bag. Paul watched her go up the road between the hedges—a little, quick-stepping figure, and his heart ached for her, that she was thrust forward again into pain and trouble. And she, tripping so quickly in her sandals, like at the back of her her son's heart waiting for her, felt him bearing what part of the burden he could, even supporting her. And when she was at the hospital, she thought: "It can't upset that lad when I tell him how bad it is, I'd better be careful." And when she was trudging home again, she felt he was coming to share her burden.

"Is it bad?" asked Paul, as soon as she entered the house.

"It's bad enough," she replied.

"What?"

She righted and sat down, undoing her bonnet-strings. Her son watched her face as it was fixed, and her small, work-hardened hands fidgeting at the base under her chin.

"Well," she answered, "it's not really dangerous, but the same, yes it's a dreadful smash. You see, a great piece of rock fell on his leg—here—and it's a compound fracture. There are pieces of bone sticking through—"

"Ogh—how horrid!" exclaimed the children.

"And," she continued, "of course he says he's going to die—he wouldn't be him if he didn't. 'I'm done for, my lad!' he said, looking at me. 'Don't be so silly,' I said to him. 'You're not going to die off a broken leg, because badly it's smashed.' 'I'll give some out of 'ere but in a wooden box,' he growled. 'Well,' I said, 'if you want them to carry you into the garden in a wooden box, when you're better, I've no doubt they will.' 'I can think it's good for him,' said the Sister. She's an awfully nice Sister, but rather strict."

Mrs. Morel took off her bonnet. The children waited in silence.

"Of course, he is bad," she continued, "and he will be. It's

a great shock, and he's lost a lot of blood; and, of course, it is a very dangerous smash. It's not at all sure that it will mend so easily. And then there's the fever and the mortification—if it took bad ways he'd quickly be gone. But there, he's a stem-blooded man, with wonderful healing flesh, and so I see no reason why it should take bad ways. Of course there's a wound—"

She was pale now with emotion and anxiety. The three children realized that it was very bad for their father, and the house was silent, anxious.

"But he always gets better," said Paul after a while.

"That's what I tell him," said the mother.

Everybody moved about in silence.

"And he really looked nearly done for," she said. "But the doctor says that is the pulse."

Annie took away her mother's coat and bonnet.

"And he looked at me when I came away! I said: 'I'll have to go now, Wilson, because of the train—and the children.' And he looked at me. It seems hard."

Paul took up his brush again and went on painting. Arthur went outside for some coal. Annie sat looking dismal. And Mrs. Marvel, in her little rocking-chair that her husband had made for her when the first baby was coming, remained motionless, brooding. She was pained, and bitterly sorry for the man who was hurt so much. But still, in her heart of hearts, where the love should have burned, there was a blank. Now, when all her woman's pity was roused to its full extent, when she would have saved herself to death to nurse him and to save him, when she would have taken the pain herself, if she could, somewhere far away inside her, she felt indifferent to him and to his suffering. It hurt her most of all, this failure to love him, even when he caused her strong emotions. She brooded awhile.

"And there," she said suddenly, "when I'd got half-way to Kansas, I found I'd come out in my working boots—and ask us them." They were an old pair of Paul's, brown and rubbed through at the toes. "I didn't know what to do with myself, for shame," she added.

In the morning, when Annie and Arthur were at school, Mrs. Marvel talked again to her son, who was helping her with her housework.

"I found Barker at the hospital. He did look bad, pale like fellow! 'Well,' I said to him, 'what sort of a journey did you have with him?' 'Dunno as you mind!' he said. 'Ay,' I said, 'I know what he'd be.' 'But it was bad for him, Mrs. Marvel, it was that!' he said. 'I know,' I said. 'At every job I thought my

"next would he' flown down out o' my mouth," he said. "An' the doctors 'e given sometimes! Mind, not for a minute would I go through w' it is again." "I can quite understand it," I said. "It's a nasty job, though," he said, "an' one w'll be a long while afore it's right again." "I've afraid it will," I said. I like Mr. Barber—I do like him. There's something so manly about him."

Paul resumed his task slowly.

"And of course," Mrs. Morel continued, "for a man like your father, the hospital is hard. He can't understand rules and regulations. And he won't let anybody else touch him, not if he can help it. When he smashed the muscles of his thigh, and it had to be dressed four times a day, would he let anybody but me or his mother do it? He wouldn't. So, of course, he'll suffer in there with the nurses. And I didn't like leaving him. The next, when I kissed him an' came away, it seemed a shame."

So she talked to her son, almost as if she were talking aloud to him, and he took it in as best he could, by sharing her trouble to lighten it. And in the end she shared almost everything with him without knowing.

Morel had a very bad time. For a week he was in a critical condition. Then he began to mend. And then, knowing he was going to get better, the whole family sighed with relief, and proceeded to live happily.

They went out badly off whilst Morel was in the hospital. There were fourteen shillings a week from the pit, ten shillings from the sick club, and five shillings from the Disability Fund; and then every week the ladies had something for him. Morel—five or seven shillings—so that she was quite well to do. And whilst Morel was progressing favourably in the hospital, the family was extraordinarily happy and peaceful. On Saturdays and Wednesdays Mrs. Morel went to Nottingham to see her husband. Then she always brought back some little thing: a small box of paints for Paul, or some thick paper; a couple of postcards for Annie, that the whole family rejoiced over for days before the girl was allowed to send them away; or a fountain for Arthur, or a bit of pretty wood. She described her adventures from the big shops with joy. Soon the folk in the picture-shop knew her, and knew about Paul. The girl in the book-shop took a keen interest in him. Mrs. Morel was full of information when she got home from Nottingham. The three sat round till bedtime, laughing, putting in, arguing. Then Paul often asked the fire.

"For the man in the house now," he used to say to his mother with joy. They learned how perfectly peaceful the home could be. And they almost regretted—though none of them would have

PAUL LAUNCHED INTO LIFE.

owned to such callousness—that their father was soon coming back.

Paul was now fourteen, and was looking for work. He was a rather small and rather badly-made boy, with dark brown hair and light blue eyes. His face had already lost its youthful smoothness, and was becoming somewhat like William's—rough-featured, almost rugged—and it was extraordinarily mobile. Usually he looked as if he saw things, was full of life, and warm; then his smile, like his mother's, came suddenly and was very lively; and then, when there was any sting in his soul's quick running, his face went stupid and ugly. He was the sort of boy that becomes a clown and a lost as soon as he is not understood, or feels himself held cheap; and, again, is adorable at the first touch of warmth.

He suffered very much from the first contact with anything. When he was seven, the staring school had been a nightmare and a torture to him. But afterwards he liked it. And now that he felt he had to go out into life, he went through agonies of shocking self-consciousness. He was quite a clever painter for a boy of his years, and he knew some French and German and mathematics that Mr. Henson had taught him. But nothing he had was of any commercial value. He was not strong enough for heavy manual work, his mother said. He did not care for making things with his hands, preferred racing about, or making excursions into the country, or reading, or painting.

"What do you want to be?" his mother asked.

"Anything."

"That is no answer," said Mrs. Morel.

But it was quite truthfully the only answer he could give. His ambition, as far as this world's gear went, was quietly to earn his thirty or thirty-five shillings a week somewhere near home, and then, when his father died, have a cottage with his mother, paint and go out as he liked, and live happy ever after. That was his programme as far as doing things went. But he was proud within himself, measuring people against himself, and placing them, inexorably. And he thought that perhaps he might also make a painter, the real thing. But that he left alone.

"Then," said his mother, "you must look in the paper for the advertisements."

He looked at her. It seemed to him a bitter transition and an anguish to go through. But he said nothing. When he got up in the morning, his whole being was knotted up over this new thought:

"I've got to go and look for advertisements for a job."

HOME AND LOVERS

It stood in front of the morning, that thought, killing all joy and even life, for him. His heart felt like a tight knot.

And then, at ten o'clock, he set off. He was supposed to be a quiet, quiet child. Going up the sunny street of the little town, he felt as if all the folk he met said to themselves: "He's going to the Co-op reading-room to look in the papers for a place. He can't get a job. I suppose he's living on his mother's." Then he trooped up the stone stairs behind the drapery shop at the Co-op, and peeped in the reading-room. Usually one or two men were there, either old, carbon fellows, or colliers "on the club." So he entered, full of shyness and suffering when they looked up, seated himself at the table, and pretended to scan the news. He knew they would think, "What does a lad of thirteen want in a reading-room with a newspaper?" and he suffered.

Then he looked wistfully out of the window. Already he was a prisoner of industrialism. Large warehouses stared over the old red wall of the garden opposite, looking in their jolly way down on the women who were hurrying with something for dinner. The valley was full of corn, brightening in the sun. Two colliers, among the folk, waved their small white plumes of steam. Far off on the hills were the woods of Arnsley, dark and fascinating. Already his heart went down. He was being taken into bondage. His freedom in the beloved home valley was going now.

The brewer's waggons came rolling up from Keweenaw with enormous barrels, four a side, like beans in a burnt bean-pod. The waggoner, dressed aloft, rolling manfully in his seat, was not so much below Paul's eye. The man's hair, on his small, bullet head, was bleached almost white by the sun, and on his thick red arms, tanned like his sack apron, the white hairs glistened. His red face shone and was almost asleep with sunshine. The horses, harnessed and harnessed, went on by themselves, looking by far the meanest of the show.

Paul wished he were stupid. "I wish," he thought to himself, "I was fat like him, and like a dog in the sun. I wish I was a pig and a brewer's waggoner."

Then, the room being at last empty, he would hastily copy an advertisement on a scrap of paper, then another, and slip out in immense relief. His mother would scan over his copies.

"Yes," she said, "you may try."

William had written out a letter of application, couched in admirable business language, which Paul copied, with variations. The boy's handwriting was wonderful, so that William, who did all things well, got into a fever of impatience.

The elder brother was becoming quite senile. In London he

found he could associate with men far above his first-world friends in station. Some of the clerks in the office had studied for the law, and were more or less going through a kind of apprenticeship. William always made friends among men wherever he went, he was so jolly. Therefore he was soon visiting and staying in houses of men who, in Bathwood, would have looked down on the unapproachable bank manager, and would merely have called indifferently on the Rector. So he began to love himself as a great gun. He was, indeed, rather surprised at the ease with which he became a gentleman.

His mother was glad, he seemed so pleased. And his lodging in Whitechapel was so dreary. But now there seemed to come a kind of fever into the young man's letters. He was unsettled by all the change, he did not stand firm on his own feet, but seemed to spin rather giddily on the quick current of the new life. His mother was anxious for him. She could feel him losing himself. He had danced and gone to the theatre, boated on the river, been out with friends; and she knew he sat up afterwards in his cold bedroom grinding away at Latin, because he intended to get on in his office, and in the law as much as he could. She never sent him money any more now. It was all taken, the little he had, for his own life. And she did not want any, except sometimes, when she was in a tight corner, and when ten shillings would have saved her much worry. She still dreamed of William, and of what he would do with himself behind him. Never for a minute would she admit to herself how heavy and anxious her heart was because of him.

Also he talked a good deal now of a girl he had met at a dance, a handsome brunette, quite young, and a lady, after whom the men were running thick and fast.

"I wonder if you would run, my boy," his mother wrote to him, "unless you saw all the other men chasing her too. You feel safe enough and vain enough in a crowd. But take care, and see how you feel when you find yourself alone, and in mischief."

William answered these things, and continued the chase. He had taken the girl on the river. "If you saw her, mother, you would know how I feel. Tall and elegant, with the clearest of skin, transparent olive complexion, hair as black as jet, and such grey eyes—bright, sparkling, like lights on water at night. It is all very well to be a bit critical till you see her. And she dances as well as any woman in London. I tell you, your son doesn't half put his head up when she goes walking down Piccadilly with him."

His, Miss wondered, in her heart, after you did not go walking down Piccadilly with an elegant figure and fine clothes, rather than with a woman who was near to him. But she congratulated

beaten wood. All was quiet and very lonely. Mrs. Morel took two steps forward, then walked. Paul stood behind her. She had on her Sunday bonnet and a black veil; he wore a boy's broad white collar and a Norfolk suit.

One of the clerks looked up. He was thin and tall, with a small face. His way of looking was stern. Then he glanced round to the other end of the room, where was a glass office. And then he came forward. He did not say anything, but bowed in a gentle, inquiring fashion towards Mrs. Morel.

"Can I see Mr. Jordan?" she asked.

"I'll seek him," answered the young man.

He went down to the glass office. A red-faced, white-whiskered old man looked up. He reminded Paul of a pomeranian dog. Then the same little man came up the room. He had short legs, was rather stout, and wore an alpaca jacket. So, with one ear up, as it were, he came slowly and inquiringly down the room.

"Good-morning!" he said, halting before Mrs. Morel, in doubt as to whether she were a customer or not.

"Good-morning. I came with my son, Paul Morel. You asked him to call this morning."

"Come this way," said Mr. Jordan, in a rather snappy little manner intended to be business-like.

They followed the manufacturer into a grubby little room, upholstered in black American leather, shiny with the rubbing of many customers. On the table was a pile of trunks, yellow with-leather straps tangled together. They looked new and lying. Paul sniffed the odour of new wash-leathers. He wondered what the things were. By this time he was so much amazed that he only noticed the outside things.

"Sit down!" said Mr. Jordan, briefly pointing Mrs. Morel to a horse-hair chair. She sat on the edge in an uncertain fashion. Then the little old man fidgeted and found a paper.

"Did you write this letter?" he snapped, staring what Paul recognized as his own note-paper in front of him.

"Yes," he answered.

At that moment he was occupied in two ways: first, in feeling guilty for writing a lie, since William had composed the letter; second, in wondering why this letter seemed so strange and different, in the fat, red hand of the man, from what it had been when it lay on the kitchen table. It was his part of himself gone away. He noticed the way the man held it.

"Where did you learn to write?" said the old man crossly.

Paul merely looked at him steadily, and did not answer.

"He is a bad writer," put in Mrs. Morel apologetically. Then

she pushed up her veil. Paul hated her for not being kinder with this common little man, and he loved her face dear of the veil.

"And you say you know French?" inquired the little man, still sharply.

"Yes," said Paul.

"What school did you go to?"

"The Board-school."

"And did you learn it there?"

"No—no—" The boy went crimson and got no further.

"His godfather gave him lessons," said Mrs. Morel, half pleading and rather sincere.

Mr. Jordan burst out. Then, in his friendly manner—he always seemed to keep his hands ready for action—he pulled another sheet of paper from his pocket, unfolded it. The paper made a rustling noise. He handed it to Paul.

"Read that," he said.

It was a note in French, in thin, flowy foreign handwriting that the boy could not decipher. He stared blankly at the paper.

"*Monsieur,*" he began; then he looked in great confusion at Mr. Jordan. "It's the—it's the——"

He wanted to say "handwriting," but his wit would no longer work even sufficiently to supply him with the word. Feeling as was dead, and having Mr. Jordan, he turned desperately to the paper again.

"Sir,—Please send me '—er—er—I can't tell the—er—' two pairs—g'd /f' his—grey thread stockings '—er—er—' two—without '—er—er—I can't tell the words—er—' legs—fingers—er—I can't tell the——"

He wanted to say "handwriting," but the word still refused to come. Seeing him stuck, Mr. Jordan snatched the paper from him.

"Please send by return two pairs grey thread stockings without me."

"Well," flushed Paul, "'legs' means 'fingers'—no well—no a rule——"

The little man looked at him. He did not know whether "legs" meant "fingers"; he knew that for all his purposes it meant "yes."

"Hagons to stockings!" he snapped.

"Well, it *does* mean Hagons," the boy persisted.

He hated the little man, who made such a chid of him. Mr. Jordan looked at the pale, stupid, defiant boy, then at the mother, who sat quiet and with that proud-but-off look of the poor who have to depend on the favour of others.

"And where could he come?" he asked.

"Well," said Mrs. Morel, "as soon as you wish. He has finished school now."

"He would live in Buxton?"

"Yes; but he could be in—at the station—at quarter to eight."

"What?"

It ended by Paul's being engaged as junior spinal clerk at eight shillings a week. The boy did not open his mouth to any another word, after having learned that "shillings" means "pounds." He followed his mother down the stairs. She looked at him with her bright blue eyes full of love and joy.

"I think you'll like it," she said.

"'Shillings' does mean 'pounds,' mother, and it was the writing. I couldn't read the writing."

"Never mind, my boy. I'm sure he'll be all right, and you won't see much of him. What's that fine young fellow doing? I'm sure you'd like them."

"But what's that Mr. Jordan cousin, mother? Does he own a shop?"

"I suppose he was a workman who has got on," she said. "You men's mind people so much. They're not being disagreeable to you—it's their way. You always think people are meaning things for you. But they don't."

It was very sunny. Over the big desolate space of the marketplace the blue sky shone clear, and the granite cottages of the paving glistened. Shops down the Long Row were deep in shadow, and the shadow was full of colour. Just where the horse men trampled across the market was a row of fruit stalls, with fruit blaring in the sun—apples and piles of reddish oranges, small greenish plums and lemons. There was a warm scent of fruit as mother and son passed. Gradually his feeling of ignorance and of rage sank.

"Where should we go for dinner?" asked the mother.

It was this to be a rotten misadventure. Paul had only been to an eating-house once or twice in his life, and then only to have a cup of tea and a bun. Most of the people of Buxton considered that tea and bread and butter, and perhaps posied beef, was all they could afford to eat in Nottingham. Raw cooked dinner was considered great extravagance. Paul felt rather giddy.

They found a place that looked quite cheap. But when Mrs. Morel scanned the bill of fare, her heart was heavy, things were so dear. So she ordered kidney pie and porridge as the cheapest available dish.

"We oughtn't to have come here, mother," said Paul.

"Never mind," she said. "We won't come again."

She insisted on his having a small current tart, because he liked women.

"I don't want it, mother," he pleaded.

"Yes," she insisted; "you'll have it."

And she looked round for the waitress. But the waitress was busy, and Mrs. Morel did not like to bother her again. So the mother and son waited for the girl's pleasure, whilst she flitted among the men.

"Beeson hurry!" said Mrs. Morel to Paul. "Look now, she's taking that man his pudding, and he comes lung after us."

"It doesn't matter, mother," said Paul.

Mrs. Morel was angry. But she was too poor, and her desires were too meagre, so that she had not the courage to insist on her rights just then. They waited and waited.

"Should we go, mother?" he said.

Then Mrs. Morel stood up. The girl was passing near.

"Will you bring me current tart?" said Mrs. Morel clearly.

The girl looked round insolently.

"Directly," she said.

"We have waited quite long enough," said Mrs. Morel.

In a moment the girl came back with the tart. Mrs. Morel asked coldly for the bill. Paul wanted to sink through the floor. He marvelled at his mother's hardness. He knew that only years of hardship had taught her to insist even on little on her rights. She shook as much as he.

"It's the last time I go down for anything!" she declared, when they were outside the place, thankful to be clear.

"We'll go," she said, "and look at Krog's and Boon's, and see at two places, shall we?"

They had discussions over the pictures, and Mrs. Morel wanted to buy him a little table brush that he had asked after. But this indulgence he refused. He staid in lines of retailers' shops and drapers' shops almost bored, but content for her to be interested. They wandered on.

"Now, just look at those black gapes!" she said. "They make your mouth water. I've wanted some of those for years, but I s't have to wait a bit before I get them."

Then she rejoined in the florist, standing in the doorway sniffing.

"Oh! oh! Isn't it simply lovely!"

Paul saw, in the darkness of the shop, an elegant young lady in black peering over the counter curiously.

"They're looking at you," he said, trying to draw his mother away.

"But what is it?" she exclaimed, relating to be moved.

"Banks!" he answered, smiling hastily. "Look, there's a nibble!"

"Is there indeed and when. But really, I never knew anything so small like it!" And, to his great relief, she moved out of the doorway, but only to stand in front of the window.

"Paul!" she cried to him, who was trying to get out of sight of the elegant young lady in black—the shop-girl.

"Paul! just look here!"

He came reluctantly back.

"Now, just look at that necklace!" she exclaimed, pointing.

"It's not!" He made a curious, interested sound. "You'd think every woman at the flower was going to fall off, they hang so big and heavy!"

"And such an abundance!" she cried.

"And the way they drop downwork with their threads and lace!"

"Yes!" she exclaimed. "Lovely!"

"I wonder who'll buy it!" he said.

"I wonder!" she answered. "Not us."

"It would die in our parlour."

"Yes, hardly mild, unless today, it kills every bit of a plant you put in, and the kitchen chokes them to death."

They bought a few things, and set off towards the station. Looking up the canal, through the dark gaps of the buildings, they saw the Castle on its bluff of brown, green-barked rock, in a positive miracle of delicate sunshine.

"Won't it be nice for me to come out at dinner-time?" said Paul. "I can go all round here and see everything. I'll love it."

"You will," asserted his mother.

He had spent a perfect afternoon with his mother. They arrived home in the middle evening, happy, and glowing, and tired.

In the morning he filled in the form for his season-ticket and took it to the station. When he got back, his mother was just beginning to wash the floor. He sat crunched up on the sofa.

"The sign it'll be here by Saturday," he said.

"And how much will it be?"

"About one pound eleven," he said.

She went on washing her floor in silence.

"Is it a lot?" he asked.

"It's no more than I thought," she answered.

"As? I'll save eight shillings a week," he said.

She did not answer, but went on with her work. At last she said:

"That William promised me, when he went to London, as he'd

give me a pound a month. He has given me ten shillings—twice; and now I know he hasn't a farthing if I need him. Not that I want it. Only just now you'd think he might be able to help with this matter, which I'd never expected."

"He seems a lot," said Paul.

"He seems a hundred and thirty pounds. But they're all alike. They're large in person, but in person a little different you get."

"He spends over fifty shillings a week on himself," said Paul.

"And I keep this house on less than thirty," she replied; "and am supposed to find money for extras. But they don't care about helping you, once they're gone. He'd rather spend it on that dress-up creature."

"She should have her own money if she's so grand," said Paul.

"She should, but she hasn't. I asked him. And I know he doesn't buy her a gold bangle for nothing. I wonder whoever bought her a gold bangle."

William was messing up with his "Clips," as he called her. He asked the girl—her name was Louisa Lily Daisy Womersley—for a photograph to send to his mother. The photo came—a handsome brunette, taken in profile, twisting slightly—and, it might be, quite asked, for on the photograph not a scrap of clothing was to be seen, only a naked bust.

"Yes," wrote Mrs. Morel to her son, "the photograph of Louie is very striking, and I can see she must be attractive. But do you think, my boy, it was very good taste of a girl to give her young man that photo to send to his mother—the first? Certainly the shoulders are beautiful, as you say. But I hardly expected to see so much of them at the first view."

Morel found the photograph standing on the dresser in the parlour. He came out with it between his thick thumb and finger.

"Who does reckon this is?" he asked of his wife.

"It's the girl our William is going with," replied Mrs. Morel.

"Him! He's a bright youth, from the look on 'em, and we are waster de him overmuch good rather. Who is she?"

"Her name is Louisa Lily Daisy Womersley."

"An' come again to-morrow!" exclaimed the miser. "An' is 'er an actress?"

"She is not. She's supposed to be a lady."

"I'll bet!" he exclaimed, still staring at the photo. "A lady, is she? An' how much does she expect to keep up this sort of game on?"

"On nothing. She lives with an old aunt, whom she hates, and takes what bit of money's given her."

"H'm!" said Morrel, laying down the photograph. "Then he's a fool to let 'em up wi' such a set as that."

"Dear Mamma," William replied. "I'm sorry you didn't like the photograph. It never occurred to me when I sent it, that you mightn't think it decent. However, I told Gyp that it didn't quite suit your prim and proper notions, so she's going to send you another, that I hope will please you better. She's always bringin' photographs; in fact, the photographs ask her if they may take her the nothing."

Presently the new photograph came, with a little silly note from the girl. This time the young lady was seen in a black satin evening bodice, cut square, with little puff sleeves, and black hair hanging down her beautiful arms.

"I wonder if she ever wears anything except evening clothes," said Mrs. Morrel sarcastically. "I'm sure I ought to be impressed."

"You are disagreeable, mother," said Paul. "I think the face set with bare shoulders is lovely."

"Do you?" answered his mother. "Well, I don't."

On the Monday morning the boy got up at six to start work. He had the season-ticket, which had cost much kindness, in his waistcoat-pocket. He knod it with his hand of yellow across. His mother packed his dinner in a small, shut-up basket, and he put off at a quarter to seven to catch the 7.15 train. Mrs. Morrel came to the entry-end to see him off.

It was a golden morning. From the ash-trees the dew-drops, green beads that the children call "pigeons" were twinkling gently down on a little breeze, into the green gardens of the house. The valley was full of a hazy, dark haze, through which the ripe corn shimmered, and in which the steams from Mincro pit melted softly. Puffs of wind came. Paul looked over the high woods of Aldeney, where the country gleamed, and home had never pulled at him so powerfully.

"Good-morning, mother," he said, smiling, but feeling very unhappy.

"Good-morning," she replied dully and modestly.

She stood in her white apron on the open road, watching him as he crossed the field. He had a small, compact body that looked full of life. She felt, as she saw him trudging over the field, that where he determined to go he would get. She thought of William. He would have leaped the fence instead of going round to the stile. He was away in London, doing well. Paul would be working in Nottingham. Now she had two sons in the world. She could think of two places, great centres of industry, and feel that she had put a man into each of them, that these men would work out what she

wanted; they were derived from her, they were of her, and their work also would be hers. All the morning long she thought of Paul.

At eight o'clock he climbed the dismal stairs of Jordan's Sweeping Appliance Factory, and stood helplessly against the first great parcel-stack, waiting for somebody to pick him up. The place was still not awake. Over the counters were great dust sheets. Two men only had arrived, and were heard talking in a corner, as they took off their coats and rolled up their shirt-sleeves. It was not past eight. Evidently there was no rush of punctuality. Paul listened to the voices of the two clerks. Then he heard someone cough, and saw in the office at the end of the room an old decaying clerk, in a round smoking-cap of black velvet unbecomingly with red and green, opening letters. He waited and waited. One of the junior clerks went to the old man, greeted him cheerily and loudly. Evidently the old "chief" was deaf. Then the young fellow came striding importantly down to his counter. He spied Paul.

"Hello!" he said. "You the new lad?"

"Yes," said Paul.

"H'ya! What's your name?"

"Paul Morel."

"Paul Morel? All right, you come on round here."

Paul followed him round the rectangle of counters. The room was second storey. It had a great hole in the middle of the front, lined as with a wall of counters, and down this wide shaft the lifts went, and the light for the bottom storey. Also there was a corresponding big, oblong hole in the ceiling, and one could see above, over the cornice of the top floor, some machinery; and right away overhead was the glass roof, and all light for the three storeys came downwards, getting dimmer, so that it was always light on the ground floor and rather gloomy on the second floor. The factory was the top floor, the warehouse the second, the storeroom the ground floor. It was an imaginary, ancient place.

Paul was led round to a very dark corner.

"This is the 'Spinal' corner," said the clerk. "You're Spinal, with Pappemorth. He's your boss, but he's not come yet. He doesn't get here till half-past eight. So you can fetch the letters, if you like, from Mr. Melling down there."

The young man pointed to the old clerk in the office.

"All right," said Paul.

"Here's a peg to hang your cap on. Here are your entry ledgers. Mr. Pappemorth won't be long."

And the thin young man stalked away with long, busy strides over the hollow wooden floor.

After a minute or two Paul went down and stood in the shade of the glass office. The old clerk in the smoking-cap looked down over the rim of his spectacles.

"Good-morning," he said, kindly and inexpressively. "You want the letters for the Special Department, Thomas?"

Paul answered being called "Thomas." But he took the letters and returned to his dark place, where the counter made an angle, where the great parcel-rack came to an end, and where there were three desks at the corner. He sat on a high stool and read the letters—those whose handwriting was not too difficult. They ran as follows:

"Will you please send me at once a pair of lady's slip spinal thigh-bands, without ties, such as I had from you last year; length eight to knee, etc." Or, "Major Chamberlain wishes to repeat his previous order for a silk non-elastic respiratory bandage."

Many of these letters, some of them in French or Norwegian, were a great puzzle to the boy. He sat on his stool nervously avoiding the arrival of his "boss." He suffered moments of abjection when, at half-past eight, the factory girls for a space trooped past him.

Mr. Pipplesworth arrived, clanking a chloroform gun, at about twenty to nine, when all the other men were at work. He was a thin, yellow man with a red nose, quick, snooty, and usually but rarely dandied. He was about thirty-six years old. There was something rather "faggy," rather smart, rather loose and dandied, and something warm, and something slightly contemptible about him.

"You my new lad?" he said.

Paul stood up and said he was.

"Reached the letter?"

Mr. Pipplesworth gave a shove to his gun.

"Yes."

"Copied 'em?"

"Yes."

"Well, come on then, let's look 'em up. Changed your coat?"

"No."

"You want to bring an old coat and leave it here." He pronounced the last words with the chloroform gun between his side teeth. He vanished into darkness behind the great parcel-rack, reappeared suddenly, turning up a smart striped shirt-cuff over a thin and hairy arm. Then he slipped into his coat. Paul noticed how thin he was, and that his trousers were in folds behind. He asked a stool, dragged it beside the boy's, and sat down.

"So slow," he said.

Paul took a seat.

Mr. Papplesworth was very close to him. The man seized the book, snatched a long entry-book out of a rack in front of him, flung it open, turned a few, and said:

"Now look here. You want to copy these letters in here." He waffled twice, gave a quick shove at his glass, raised steadily at a letter, then went very still and absorbed, and wrote the entry rapidly, in a beautiful flourishing hand. He glanced quickly at Paul.

"See that?"

"Yes."

"Think you can do it all right?"

"Yes."

"All right then, let's see you."

He sprang off his stool. Paul took a pen. Mr. Papplesworth disappeared. Paul rather liked copying the letters, but he wrote slowly, laboriously, and exceedingly badly. He was doing the fourth letter, and feeling quite busy and happy, when Mr. Papplesworth reappeared.

"Now then, how'd yer getting on? Done 'em?"

He leaned over the boy's shoulder, chewing, and snuffing at chloroform.

"Swike my baby, lad, but you're a beautiful writer!" he exclaimed miraculously. "No'er mind, how many h'yer done! Only three? I'd 'a' sworn 'em. Out on, my lad, at' put numbers on 'em. Here look! Get on!"

Paul ground away at the letters, while Mr. Papplesworth faded over various jobs. Suddenly the boy started as a shrill whistle sounded near his ear. Mr. Papplesworth came, took a plug out of a pipe, and said, in an amazingly cross and hoarse voice:

"Yes?"

Paul heard a faint voice, like a woman's, out of the mouth of the tube. He gazed in wonder, never having seen a speaking-tube before.

"Well," said Mr. Papplesworth disagreeably into the tube, "you'd better get some of your back work done, then."

Again the woman's dry voice was heard, sounding pretty and cross.

"I've not time to stand here while you talk," said Mr. Papplesworth, and he pushed the plug into the tube.

"Come, my lad," he said imploringly to Paul, "there's Polly crying out for them orders. Give 'em you back up a bit? Here, come out!"

He took the book, to Paul's immense chagrin, and he-

supply himself. He worked quickly and well. This done, he seized some strips of long yellow paper, about three inches wide, and made out the day's order for the workgirls.

"You'd better watch out," he said to Paul, working all the while rapidly. Paul watched the weird little drawings of legs, and thighs, and ankles, with the strokes across and the numbers, and the few brief directions which his chief made upon the yellow paper. Then Mr. Papplesworth finished and jumped up.

"Come on with me," he said, and the yellow papers flying in his hands, he dashed through a door and down some stairs, into the basement where the gas was burning. They crossed the cold, damp storeroom, then a long, dreary room with a long table on trestles, into a smaller, cozier apartment, not very high, which had been built on to the main building. In this room a small woman with a red serge blouse, and her black hair done on top of her head, was waiting like a proud little baroness.

"Here please!" said Papplesworth.

"I think it is 'here you are!'" exclaimed Polly. "The girls have been here nearly half an hour waiting. Just think of the time wasted!"

"No think of getting your work done and not talking so much," said Mr. Papplesworth. "You could be' been finishing off."

"You know quite well we finished everything off on Saturday!" cried Polly, flying at him, her dark eyes flashing.

"To-ra-ra-ra-terrar!" he mocked. "Here's your new lad. Don't ruin him as you did the last."

"As we did the last!" repeated Polly. "Yes, we do a lot of ruining, we do. My word, a lad would take some raising after he'd been with you."

"It's fine for work now, not for talk," said Mr. Papplesworth severely and calmly.

"It was time for work some time back," said Polly, snatching away with her head in the air. She was an even little body of forty.

In that room were two round spiral machines on the bench under the window. Through the inner doorway was another larger room, with six more machines. A little group of girls, already dressed and in white aprons, stood talking together.

"Have you nothing else to do but talk?" said Mr. Papplesworth.

"Only wait for you," said one handsome girl, laughing.

"Well, get on, get on," he said. "Come on, my lad. You'll know your road down here again."

And Paul ran upstairs after his chief. He was given some clothing and invited to do. He stood at the desk, listening to

his miserable handwriting. Presently Mr. Jordan came striding down from the glass office and stood behind him, to the boy's great discomfort. Suddenly a red and fat finger was thrust on the form he was filling in.

"Mr. J. A. Bates, Enquire!" exclaimed the cross voice just behind his ear.

Paul looked at "Mr. J. A. Bates, Enquire" in his own vile writing, and wondered what was the matter now.

"Didn't they teach you any better than that while they were at it? If you put 'Mr.' you don't put 'Enquire'—a man can't be both at once."

The boy regretted his too-much generosity in disposing of *Bonuses*, hesitated, and with trembling fingers, scratched out the "Mr." Then all at once Mr. Jordan marched away the window.

"Make another! Are you going to send that to a gentleman?" And he tore up the blue form brutally.

Paul, his ears red with shame, began again. Still Mr. Jordan watched.

"I don't know what they do teach in school. You'd have to write better than that. Lots have nothing nowadays, but how to write poetry and play the fiddle. Have you seen his writing?" he asked of Mr. Papplesworth.

"Yes, please, isn't it?" replied Mr. Papplesworth indifferently.

Mr. Jordan gave a little grunt, not amiable. Paul divined that his master's back was worse than his face. Indeed, the little manufacturer, although he spoke bad English, was quite gentleman enough to leave his man alone and to take no notice of trifles. But he knew he did not look like the boss and owner of the show, so he had to play his rôle of proprietor as best, to put things on a right footing.

"Let's see, what's your name?" asked Mr. Papplesworth of the boy.

"Paul Morel."

It is curious that children suffer so much at having to pronounce their own names.

"Paul Morel, is it? All right, you Paul-Morel through them things there, and them——"

Mr. Papplesworth subsided on to a stool, and began writing. A girl came up from out of a door just behind, put some newly poured plastic web appliances on the counter, and returned. Mr. Papplesworth picked up the white-blue knee-band, examined it, and its yellow order-paper quickly, and put it on one side. Next was a flesh-pink "leg." He went through the few things, wrote out a couple of orders, and called to Paul to accompany him. This

time they went through the door whence the girl had emerged. There Paul found himself at the top of a little wooden flight of steps, and below him saw a room with windows round two sides, and at the farther end half a dozen girls sitting bending over the benches in the light from the windows, sewing. They were singing together "Two Little Girls in Blue." Hearing the door opened, they all turned round, to see Mr. Pappleworth and Paul looking down on them from the far end of the room. They stopped singing.

"Can't you make a bit less row?" said Mr. Pappleworth. "Folks'll think we keep cats."

A black-haired woman on a high stool turned her long, rather heavy face towards Mr. Pappleworth, and said, in a contralto voice.

"They're all tom-cats then."

To vain Mr. Pappleworth tried to be impressive for Paul's benefit. He descended the steps into the finishing-off room, and went to the black-haired Fanny. She had such a short body on her high stool that her head, with its great bands of bright brown hair, seemed over large, as did her pale, heavy face. She wore a dress of green-black cashmere, and her wrists, coming out of the narrow cuffs, were thin and flat, as she put down her work cautiously. He showed her something that was wrong with a knee-cap.

"Well," she said, "you needn't come blinding it on to me. It's not my fault." Her colour mounted to her cheek.

"I never said it was your fault. Will you do as I tell you?" replied Mr. Pappleworth shortly.

"You don't say it's my fault, but you'd like to make out as it was," the black-haired woman cried, almost in tears. Then she snatched the knee-cap from her "loom," saying: "Yes, I'll do it for you, but you needn't be snappy."

"Here's your new lad," said Mr. Pappleworth.

Fanny turned, smiling very gently on Paul.

"Oh!" she said.

"You don't make a sofa of him between you."

"It's not us as 'ad makes a sofa of him," she said indignantly.

"Come on then, Paul," said Mr. Pappleworth.

"As says, Paul," said one of the girls.

There was a cheer of laughter. Paul went out, blushing deeply, not having spoken a word.

The day was very long. All morning the work-people were coming to speak to Mr. Pappleworth. Paul was writing or learning to make up parcels, ready for the holiday post. At one o'clock, or, rather, at a quarter to one, Mr. Pappleworth disappeared to catch

his train; he lived in the suburbs. At one o'clock, Paul, feeling very hot, took his dinner-bucket down into the stockroom in the basement, that had the long table on trestles, and ate his meal hurriedly, alone in that cellar of gloom and darkness. Then he went out of doors. The brightness and the freedom of the streets made him feel adventurous and happy. But at two o'clock he was back in the corner of the big road. Soon the work-girls were tramping past, making runs. It was the commoner girls who worked upstairs at the heavy task of mass-making and the finishing of artificial limbs. He waited for Mr. Pappaworth, not knowing what to do, sitting scribbling on the yellow newspaper. Mr. Pappaworth came at twenty minutes to three. Then he sat and gossiped with Paul, treating the boy entirely as an equal, even in age.

In the afternoon there was never very much to do, unless it were near the week-end, and the accounts had to be made up. At five o'clock all the men went down into the dungeons with the table on trestles, and there they had tea, eating bread and butter on the bare, dirty boards, talking with the same kind of ugly haste and slovenliness with which they ate their meal. And yet upstairs the atmosphere among them was always jolly and clean. The cellar and the trestles affected them.

About tea, when all the gases were lighted, and went more brightly. There was the big evening post to get off. The boss came up warm and easily poured from the water-cooler. Paul had made out the invoice. Now he had the packing up and addressing to do, then he had to weigh his stack of parcels on the scales. Everywhere voices were calling weights, there was the clink of metal, the rapid snapping of string, the hurrying up old Mr. Melling for stamps. And at last the postman came with his sack, laughing and jolly. Then everything started off, and Paul took his dinner-bucket and ran to the station to catch the eight-twenty train. The day in the factory was just twelve hours long.

His mother sat waiting for him rather anxiously. He had to walk from Kansas, so was not home until about twenty past nine. And he left the house before seven in the morning. Mrs. Ford was rather anxious about his health. But the doctor had had to put up with as much that she expected her children to make the same odds. They must go through with what came. And Paul stayed at Jordana, although all the time he was there his health suffered from the darkness and lack of air and the long hours.

He came in pale and tired. His mother looked at him. She saw he was rather slowed, and her anxiety all went.

"Well, and how was it?" she asked.

"Ever so funny, mother," he replied. "You don't have to wash a bit hard, and they're nice with you."

"And did you get on all right?"

"Yes, they only say my writing's bad. But Mr. Pappleworth—let's say now—said to Mr. Jordan I should be all right. I'm Spink, mother; you must come and see. It's ever so nice."

Soon he filed Jordan's. Mr. Pappleworth, who had a certain "taken to" favour about him, was always natural, and treated him as if he had been a comrade. Sometimes the "Spink boy" was irritable, and showed more loquacity than ever. Even then, however, he was not offensive, but one of those people who hurt themselves by their own irritability more than they hurt other people.

"Haven't you done that, yet?" he would cry. "Go on, be a mouth of Sordarys."

Again, and Paul could understand him best then, he was jocular and in high spirits.

"I'm going to bring my little Yorkshire terrier black tomorrow," he said jocularly to Paul.

"What's a Yorkshire terrier?"

"Don't know what a Yorkshire terrier is? Don't know a *fish-dog*—!" Mr. Pappleworth was aghast.

"It is a little silky cat—colours of iron and rusty silver?"

"That's it, my lad. She's a gem. She's had five pounds' worth of pups already, and she's worth over seven pounds herself; and she doesn't weigh twenty ounces."

The next day the birth came. She was a shivering, miserable morsel. Paul did not care for her; she seemed to him a wet rag that would never dry. Then a man called for her, and began to make coarse jokes. But Mr. Pappleworth avoided his head in the direction of the boy, and the talk went on more warily.

Mr. Jordan only made one more excursion to watch Paul, and then the only fault he found was seeing the boy lay his pen on the counter.

"Put your pen in your ear, if you're going to be a clerk. Pen in your ear!" And one day he said to the lad, "Why don't you hold your shoulders straighter? Come down here," when he took him from the glass office and fixed him with special braces for keeping the shoulders square.

But Paul liked the girls best. They were several—common and rather dull. He liked them all, but they were uninteresting. Polly, the little brisk creature downstairs, finding Paul eating in the cellar, asked him if she could cook him anything on her little stove. Next day his mother gave him a dish that could be heated up. He took it into the pleasant, clean room to Polly. And very soon

it grew to be an established custom that he should have dinner with her. When he came in at eight in the morning he took his basket to her, and when he came down at one o'clock she had his dinner ready.

He was not very tall, and pale, with thick chestnut hair, irregular features, and a wide, full mouth. She was like a small bird. He often called her a "robust." Though naturally rather quiet, he would fight and chatter with her for hours telling her about his home. The girls all liked to hear him talk. They often gathered in a little circle while he sat on a bench, and held forth to them, laughing. Some of them regarded him as a curious little creature, so serious, yet so bright and jolly, and always so delicate in his way with them. They all liked him, and he adored them. Folly he felt he belonged to. Then Connie, with her mane of red hair, her face of apple-blossom, her murmuring voice, such a lady in her shabby black frock, appealed to his romantic side.

"When you sit winding," he said, "it looks as if you were spinning at a spinning-wheel—it looks ever so nice. You wanted me of Helen in the 'Myth of the King.' I'd drive you if I could."

And she glanced at him blushing shyly. And later on he had a sketch he prized very much: Connie sitting on her stool before the wheel, her flowing mane of red hair on her sunny black frock, her red mouth shut and serious, raising the scarlet thread off the hank on to the reel.

With Lloyd, handsome and braver, who always seemed to thrust her hip at him, he usually joked.

Emma was rather plain, rather old, and crossmooded. But to condescend to him made her happy, and he did not mind.

"How do you put needles in?" he asked.

"Go away and don't bother."

"But I ought to know how to put needles in."

She ground at her machine all the while steadily.

"There are many things you ought to know," she replied.

"Tell me, *dear*, how to stick needles in the machine?"

"Oh, the boy, what a nuisance he is! Why, that is how you do it."

He watched her anxiously. Suddenly a whistle piped. Then Folly appeared, and said in a clear voice:

"Mr. Papplesworth wants to know how much longer you're going to be down here playing with the girls, Paul."

Fred flew upstairs, calling "Good-bye!" and Emma drew herself up.

"It wasn't *me* who wanted him to play with the machine," she said.

As a rule, when all the girls came back at two o'clock, he ran upstairs to Fanny, the headblack, in the finishing-off room. Mr. Fagglesworth did not appear till twenty to three, and he often found his boy sitting beside Fanny, talking, or drawing, or playing with the girls.

Often, after a woman's hair-dressing, Fanny would begin to sing. She had a fine contralto voice. Everybody joined in the chorus, and it went well. Paul was not at all embarrassed, after a while, sitting in the room with the half-a-dozen workgirls.

At the end of the song Fanny would say:

"I know you've been laughing at me."

"Don't be so silly, Fanny!" cried one of the girls.

Once there was mention of Gennie's red hair.

"Fanny's is better, is my theory," said Emma.

"You needn't try to make a fool of me," said Fanny, flushing deeply.

"No, but she has, Paul; she's got beautiful hair."

"It's a cross of a colour," said he. "That reddish colour like mine, and you shing. It's like impudence."

"Goodness me!" exclaimed one girl, laughing.

"How I do but get criticised," said Fanny.

"But you should see it done, Paul," cried Emma earnestly.

"It's simply beautiful. Put it down for him, Fanny, if he wants something to paint."

Fanny would not, and yet she wanted to.

"Then I'll take it down myself," said the lad.

"Well, you can if you like," said Fanny.

And he carefully took the pins out of the knot, and the mass of hair, of wondrous dark brown, slid over the humped back.

"What a lovely lot!" he exclaimed.

The girls watched. There was silence. The youth shook the hair loose from the coil.

"It's splendid!" he said, snuffing its perfume. "It'll be a'y worth pounds."

"It'll harm it you when I die, Paul," said Fanny, half-joking.

"You look just like anybody else, sitting drying their hair," said one of the girls to the long-legged headblack.

Fanny was morbidly sensitive, always imagining trouble. Polly was cool and business-like. The two departures were the ever at war, and Paul was always backing Fanny in wars. Then he was made the recipient of all her woes, and he had to pity her cause with Polly.

So the time went along happily enough. The factory had a heavenly feel. No one was marked as driven. Paul always enjoyed

is when the work got denser, towards post-time, and all the men united in labour. He liked to watch his fellow-clerks at work. The man was the work and the work was the man, one thing, for the time being. It was different with the girls. The real woman never seemed to be there at the task, but as if left out, waiting.

From the train going home at night he used to watch the lights of the town, sprinkled thick on the hills, fading together in a haze in the valleys. He felt rich in life and happy. Drawing farther off, there was a patch of lights as Bakuell like myriad pearls shaken to the ground from the steel stars; and beyond was the red glare of the furnace, glowing like hot breath on the clouds.

He had to walk two and more miles from Korton home, up two long hills, down two short hills. He was often tired, and he counted the lamps climbing the hill above him, how many more to pass. And from the hill-top, on pitch-dark nights, he looked round on the villages five or six miles away, that glowed like towns of glimmering living things, shrouded a heaven against his feet. Blackpool and Heywood scattered the far-off darkness with brilliance. And occasionally the blank valley space between was stirred, visited by a great train rushing south to London or north to Liverpool. The engines roared by like projectiles level on the darkness, flaming and burning, making the valley clang with their passage. They were gone, and the light of the town and villages glimmered in silence.

And then he came to the corner at home, which faced the other side of the night. The unknown seemed a friend now. His mother was with gladness as he entered. He put his right shilling proudly in the scale,

"It'll help, mother?" he asked weakly.

"There's precious little left," she answered, "after your ticket and dinner and what are taken off."

Then he told her the budget of the day. His money, like an Arabian Nights, was told night after night to his mother. It was almost as if it were her own life.

Death in the Family

ARTHUR MORSE was growing up. He was a quick, careless, impulsive boy, a good deal like his father. He hated study, made a great mess of his book work, and escaped as soon as possible to his sport again.

In appearance he remained the flower of the family, being well made, graceful, and full of life. His dark brown hair and fresh coloring, and his aquiline dark blue eyes shaded with long lashes, together with his generous manner and fiery temper, made him a favorite. But as he grew older his temper became uncertain. He flew into rages over a trifling, seemed unbearably raw and irritable.

His mother, whom he loved, worried of him sometimes. He thought only of himself. When he wanted amusement, all that stood in his way he hated, even if it were his. When he was in trouble he resented to her constantly.

"Goodness, boy!" she said, when he grumbled about a master who, he said, hated him. "if you don't like it, alter it, and if you can't alter it, put up with it."

And his father, whom he had loved and who had worshipped him, he came to detest. As he grew older Morse fell into a slow ruin. His body, which had been beautiful in movement and in being, shrank, did not seem to ripen with the years, but to get mean and rather displeasing. There came over him a look of meanness and of pettiness. And when the mean-looking elderly man huffed or ordered the boy about, Arthur was furious. Moreover, Morse's manner got worse and worse, his habits somewhat disgusting. When the children were growing up and in the crucial stage of adolescence, the father was like some ugly initiate to their sins. His remarks in the house were the same as he used among the colliers down pit.

"Dirty nuisance!" Arthur would cry, jumping up and going straight out of the house when his father disgusted him. And Morse persisted the more because his children hated it. He seemed to take a kind of satisfaction in disgusting them, and driving them nearly mad, while they were so irritably sensitive at the age of fourteen or fifteen. So that Arthur, who was growing up when his father was degenerate and elderly, hated him worse of all.

Then, sometimes, the father would seem to feel the contemptuous hatred of his children.

"There's not a man tries harder for his family!" he would shout. "He does his best for them, and then gets treated like a dog. But I'm not going to stand it, I tell you!"

But for the threat and the fact that he did not try so hard as he imagined, they would have felt sorry. As it was, the battle now went on daily all between father and children, he persisting in his dirty and degrading ways, just to assert his independence. They hated him.

Arthur was so inflated and irritable at last, that when he won a scholarship for the Grammar School in Northampton, his mother decided to let him live in town, with one of her sisters, and only come home at week-ends.

Agnes was still a junior teacher in the Board-school, earning about four shillings a week. But soon she would have fifteen shillings, since she had passed her examination, and there would be financial peace in the house.

Mrs. Morel came now to Paul. He was quiet and not brilliant. But still he stuck to his painting, and still he stuck to his mother. Everything he did was for her. She waited for his coming home in the evening, and then she recounted herself all all she had perceived, or of all that had occurred to her during the day. He sat and listened with his ears closed. The two shared love.

William was engaged now to his housewife, and had bought her an engagement ring that cost eight guineas. The children gaped at such a fabulous price.

"Eight guineas!" said Maud. "Marvelous! What'd you see some one, it 'ad be' looked better on 'im."

"Gives you some of it!" cried Mrs. Morel. "Why give you some of it?"

She remembered he had bought no engagement ring at all, and she preferred William, who was not mean, if he were foolish. But now the young man talked only of the dances to which he went with his betrothed, and the different splendid dresses she wore; or he told his mother with glee how they went to the theatre like great people.

He wanted to bring the girl home. Mrs. Morel said she should come at the Christmas. This time William arrived with a lady, but with no presents. Mrs. Morel had prepared supper. Hearing footsteps, she rose and went to the door. William entered.

"Hello, mother!" He kissed her hastily, then stood aside to present a tall, handsome girl, who was wearing a costume of blue black and white checks, and fur.

"Here's Gey!"

Miss Watson held out her hand and showed her teeth in a small smile.

"Oh, how do you do, Mrs. Mord?" she exclaimed.

"I am afraid you will be hungry," said Miss Mord.

"Oh no, we had dinner in the train. Have you got my gloves, Gladys?"

William Mord, big and raw-boned, looked at her quickly.

"How should I?" he said.

"Then I've lost them. Don't be cross with us."

A brown vein over his face, but he said nothing. She glanced round the kitchen. It was small and curious to her, with its glittering kitching-bunk, its easements behind the pictures, its wooden chairs and little deal table. At that moment Mord came in.

"Hello, dad!"

"Hello, my son! That's her on me!"

The two shook hands, and William introduced the lady. She gave the same smile that showed her teeth.

"How do you do, Mr. Mord?"

Mord bowed sheepishly.

"I'm very well, and I hope so are you. You must make yourself very welcome."

"Oh, thank you," she replied, rather amazed.

"You will like to go upstairs," said Mrs. Mord.

"If you don't mind; but not if it is any trouble to you."

"It is no trouble, Annie will take you. Walter, carry up this box."

"And don't be an hour dressing yourself up," said William to his betrothed.

Annie took a huge handbasket, and, too shy almost to speak, presented the young lady to the front bedroom, which Mr. and Mrs. Mord had reserved for her. It, too, was small and cold by candle-light. The collar-women only lit fires in bedrooms in case of sickness illness.

"Shall I unpack the box?" asked Annie.

"Oh, thank you very much."

Annie played the part of maid, then went downstairs for hot water.

"I think she's rather good, mother," said William. "It's a lovely journey, and we had such a rush."

"Is there anything I can give her?" asked Miss Mord.

"Oh no, she'll be all right."

But there was a chill in the atmosphere. After half an hour

Miss Western came down, having put on a purplish-colored dress, very fine for the milliner's kitchen.

"I said you you'd no need to change," said William to her.

"Oh, Grubby!" Then she turned with that rosyish smile to Mrs. Marel. "Don't you think he's always grumbling, Mrs. Marel?"

"Is he?" said Mrs. Marel. "That's not very nice of him."

"Is he'n, really?"

"You are cold," said the mother. "Won't you come near the fire?"

Marel jumped out of his armchair.

"Come and sit you here!" he cried. "Come and sit you here!"

"No, dad, keep your own chair. Sit on the sofa, Gyp," said William.

"No, no!" cried Marel. "This chair's warmer. Come and sit here, Miss Western."

"Thank you so much," said the girl, seating herself in the milliner's arm-chair, the place of honour. She quivered, feeling the warmth of the kitchen penetrate her.

"Fetch me a hanky, Grubby dear!" she said, putting up her mouth to him, and using the same intimate tone as if they were alone; which made the rest of the family feel as if they ought not to be present. The young lady evidently did not realize them as people: they were obstacles to her for the present. William winced.

In such a household, in Somerset, Miss Western would have been a lady condescending to her inferiors. These people were to her, certainly clownish—in short, the working class. How was she to adjust herself?

"I'll go," said Annie.

Miss Western took no notice, as if a servant had spoken. But when the girl came downstairs again with the handkerchief, she said, "Oh, thank you!" in a grateful way.

She sat and talked about the dinner on the train, which had been so poor; about London, about dinner. She was really very nervous, and chattered from fear. Marel sat all the time smoking his thick white tobacco, watching her, and listening to her glib London speech, as he puffed. Mrs. Marel, dressed up in her best black silk blouse, answered quietly and rather briefly. The three children sat round in silence and admiration. Miss Western was the princess. Everything of the best was got out for her: the best cups, the best spoons, the best tablecloth, the best coffee-jug. The children thought she must find it quite grand. She felt

strange, not able to realise the people, not knowing how to treat them. William joined, and was slightly uncomfortable.

At about ten o'clock he said to her:

" Aren't you tired, Gyp? "

" Exhaust, Chatterbox," she answered, at once in the Indian tone, and putting her head slightly on one side.

" I'll light her the candle, mother," he said.

" Very well," replied the mother.

Miss Western stood up, held out her hand to Miss Morel.

" Good-night, Miss Morel," she said.

Paul sat at the table, letting the water run from the tap into a moss bear-bottle. Annie washed the bottle in an old flannel pillowcase, and kissed her mother good-night. She was to share the room with the lady, because the house was full.

" You wait a minute," said Miss Morel to Annie. And Annie sat mending the hot-water bottle. Miss Western shook hands all round, to everybody's discomfort, and took her departure, preceded by William. In five minutes he was downstairs again. His heart was rather sore; he did not know why. He talked very little all everybody had gone to bed, but himself and his mother. Then he stumped with his legs apart, in his old attitude on the hearth-rug, and said hesitatingly:

" Well, mother? "

" Well, my son? "

She sat in the rocking-chair, feeling somehow hurt and humiliated, for his sake.

" Do you like her? "

" Yes," came the slow answer.

" She's shy yet, mother. She's not used to it. It's different from her aunt's house, you know."

" Of course it is, my boy; and she must find it difficult."

" She does." Then he frowned readily. " If only she wouldn't put on her absurd airs! "

" It's only her first awkwardness, my boy. She'll be all right."

" That's it, mother," he replied gratefully. But his brow was gloomy. " You know, she's not like you, mother. She's not serious, and she can't think."

" She's young, my boy."

" Yes; and she's had no sort of show. Her mother died when she was a child. Since then she's lived with her aunt, whom she can't bear. And her father was a rake. She's had no love."

" Not! Well you must make up to her."

" And so—you have to forgive her a lot of things."

" What do you have to forgive her, my boy? "

"I guess. When she seems shallow, you have to remember she's never had anybody to bring her deeper side out. And she's fairly fond of me."

"Anybody can see that."

"But you know, mother—she's—that's different from us. Those sort of people, like those the firm amongst, they don't seem to have the same principles."

"You mustn't judge too hastily," said Mrs. Morel.

But he seemed uneasy within himself.

In the morning, however, he was up singing and looking round for beauty.

"Hello!" he called, sitting on the stairs. "Are you getting up?"

"Yes," her voice called faintly.

"Merry Christmas!" he shouted to her.

Her laugh, pretty and fading, was heard in the bedroom. She did not come down in half an hour.

"Was she really getting up with the said she was?" he asked of Annie.

"Yes, she was," replied Annie.

He waited awhile, then went to the stairs again.

"Happy New Year," he called.

"Thank you, Chasley dear!" came the laughing voice, far away.

"Back up!" he implored.

It was nearly an hour, and still he was waiting for her. Morel, who always rose before six, looked at the clock.

"Well, it's a wonder!" he exclaimed.

The family had breakfasted, all but William. He went to the foot of the stairs.

"Shall I have to send you an Easter egg up there?" he called, rather gently. She only laughed. The family expected, after that time of preparation, something like magic. As for the owner, looking very nice in a blouse and skirt.

"Have you really been all this time getting ready?" he asked.

"Chasley dear! That question is not permitted, is it, Mrs. Morel?"

She played the grand lady at first. When she went with William to chapel, he in his frock coat and silk hat, she in her fur and London-made costume. Paul and Arthur and Annie expected everybody to bow to the ground in admiration. And Morel, standing in his Sunday suit at the end of the road, watching the gallant pair go, his his was the father of princes and princesses.

And yet she was not so grand. For a year now she had been a sort of secretary or clerk in a London office. But while she was

with the Maids she spanned it. She sat and let Annie or Paul wait on her as if they were her servants. She treated Mrs. Mabel with a certain glibness and Mabel with patronage. But after a day or so she began to change her tune.

William always warned Paul or Annie to go along with them on their raids. It was so much more interesting. And Paul really did admire "Gipsy" wholeheartedly; in fact, his mother severely reprimanded the boy for the admiration with which he treated the girl.

On the second day, when Lily said, "Oh, Annie, do you know where I left my stuff?" William replied:

"You leave it in your bedroom. Why do you ask Annie?"

And Lily went upstairs with a cross, shut mouth. But it angered the young man that she made a servant of his sister.

On the third evening William and Lily were dining together in the parlour by the fire in the dusk. At a quarter to eleven Mrs. Mabel was heard raking the fire. William came out to the kitchen, followed by his beloved.

"Is it as late as that, mother?" he said. She had been dining alone.

"It is not late, my boy, but it is as late as I usually sit up."

"Won't you go to bed, then?" he asked.

"And leave you two? No, my boy, I don't believe in it."

"Can't you trust us, mother?"

"Whether I can or not, I won't do it. You can stay till eleven if you like, and I can read."

"Go to bed, Gyp," he said to his girl. "The won't keep mother waiting."

"Annie has left the candle burning, Lily," said Mrs. Mabel. "I think you will see."

"Yes, thank you. Good-night, Mrs. Mabel."

William kissed his sweetheart at the foot of the stairs, and she went. He returned to the kitchen.

"Can't you trust us, mother?" he repeated, rather offended.

"My boy, I tell you I don't believe in leaving two young things like you alone downstairs when everyone else is in bed."

And he was forced to take this answer. He kissed his mother good-night.

At Easter he came over alone. And then he discussed his overhauled soulfully with his mother.

"You know, mother, when I'm away from her I don't care for her a bit. I shouldn't care if I never saw her again. But, then, when I'm with her in the evenings I am awfully fond of her."

"It's a queer sort of love to marry on," said Mrs. Mabel. "It holds you no more than that!"

"It is funny!" he exclaimed. It worried and perplexed him. "But yet—there's so much between us now I couldn't give her up."

"You know best," said Mrs. Moor. "But if it is as you say, I wouldn't call it *love*—at any rate, it doesn't look much like it."

"Oh, I don't know, mother. She's an orphan, and—"

They never came to any sort of conclusion. He seemed puzzled and rather fretful. She was rather reserved. All his strength and money went in keeping this girl. He could scarcely afford to take his mother to Nottingham when he came over.

Paul's wages had been raised at Christmas to ten shillings, to his great joy. He was quite happy at Jordan's, but his health suffered from the long hours and the confinement. His mother, to whom he became more and more significant, thought how to help.

His half-day holiday was on Monday afternoon. On a Monday morning in May, as the two sat alone at breakfast, she said:

"I think it will be a fine day."

He looked up in surprise. This meant something.

"You know Mr. Levers has gone to live on a new farm. Well, he asked me last week if I wouldn't go and see Mrs. Levers, and I promised to bring you on Monday if it's fine. Shall we go?"

"I say, little woman, how lovely!" he cried. "And we'll go this afternoon!"

Paul hurried off to the station jubilate. Down Derby Road was a cherry-tree that glowered. The old brick wall by the station ground burned scarlet, spring was a very flame of green. And the sweepscop of highroad lay, in its cool morning dust, splashed with patterns of sunshine and shadow, perfectly still. The moss sloped their great green shoulders proudly; and beside the warehouse all the morning, the bay had a vision of spring outside.

When he came home at dinner-time his mother was rather excited.

"Are we going?" he asked.

"When I'm ready," she replied.

Presently he got up.

"Go and get dressed while I wash up," he said.

She did so. He washed the pots, straightened, and then took her boots. They were quite clean. Mrs. Moor was one of those naturally acquiescent people who can walk in mud without dirtying their shoes. But Paul had to clean them for her. They were kid boots at eight shillings a pair. He, however, thought them the most dainty boots in the world, and he cleaned them with as much reverence as if they had been silver.

Suddenly she appeared in the inner doorway rather shyly. She

had got a new cotton blouse on. Paul jumped up and went forward.

"Oh, my dear!" he exclaimed. "What a bobby-dasher!"

She smiled in a little naughty way, and put her head up.

"It's not a bobby-dasher at all!" she replied. "It's very quiet."

She walked forward, while he hovered round her.

"Well," she asked, quite shy, but pretending to be high and mighty, "do you like it?"

"Awfully! You are a fine little woman to go jaunting out with!"

He went and surveyed her from the back.

"Well," he said, "if I was walking down the street behind you, I should say, 'Doesn't that little person fancy herself!'"

"Well, she doesn't," replied Miss. Ince. "She's not sure it suits her."

"Oh no! she wants to be in dirty black, looking as if she was wrapped in brown paper. It *does* suit you, and I say you look nice!"

She smiled in her little way, pleased, but pretending to know better.

"Well," she said, "it's not *yet* just three shillings. You couldn't have got it ready-made for that price, could you?"

"I should think you couldn't," he replied.

"And, you know, it's good stuff."

"Awfully pretty," he said.

The blouse was white, with a little spoil of beltrose and black.

"Too young for me, though, I'm afraid," she said.

"Too young for you!" he exclaimed in disgust. "Why don't you buy some fake white hair and stick it on your head?"

"I've even *had* no cord," she replied. "I'm going white fast enough."

"Well, you've no business to," he said. "What do I want with a white-haired mother?"

"I'm afraid you'll have to put up with one, my lad," she said rather strangely.

They set off in great style, she carrying the umbrella William had given her, because of the sun. Paul was considerably taller than she, though he was not big. He fancied himself.

On the fellow land the young wheat stood stiffly. Misses plucked its plumes of white rears, coughed, and varied hoarsely.

"Now look at that!" said Mrs. March. Mother and son stood on the road to watch. Along the ridge of the great pillow crawled a little group in silhouette against the sky, a horse, a small truck, and a man. They climbed the incline against the horizon. As

the end the man tipped the waggon. There was an awkward rattle as the waste fell down the steeper slope of an enormous bank.

"You're a mistress, mother," he said, and she took a seat on a bank, whilst he stretched rapidly. She was silent whilst he worked, looking round at the afternoon, the red cottages shining among their greenness.

"The world is a wonderful place," she said, "and wonderfully beautiful."

"And so's the pit," he said. "Look how it heaps together, like something alive almost—a big creature that you don't know."

"Yes," she said. "Perhaps!"

"And all the trucks standing waiting, like a string of boats in the tid," he said.

"And very thankful I am they are standing," she said, "for that means they'll turn middling fine this week."

"But I like the feel of men on things, while they're alive. There's a feel of men about trucks, because they've been handled with men's hands, all of them."

"Yes," said Mrs. Morel.

They went along under the trees of the highway. He was constantly informing her, but she was interested. They passed the end of Northerners, that was tooting its machines like pistols lightly in its lap. Then they turned on a private road, and in some replication approached a big farm. A dog barked furiously. A woman came out to see.

"Is this the way to Willey Farm?" Mrs. Morel asked.

Paul hung behind in terror of being sent back. But the woman was amiable, and directed them. The mother and son went through the wheat and oats, over a little bridge into a wild meadow. Peewees, with their white breasts glancing, wheeled and screamed about them. The lake was still and blue. High overhead a heron floated. Opposite, the wood leaped on the hill, green and still.

"It's a wild road, mother," said Paul. "Just like Canada."

"Isn't it beautiful?" said Mrs. Morel, looking round.

"See that heron—see—see her legs?"

He directed his mother, what she must see and what not. And she was quite content.

"But now," she said, "which way? She told me through the wood."

The wood, fanned and dark, lay on their left.

"I can feel a bit of a path this road," said Paul. "You've got some feet, somehow or other, you know."

They found a little gate, and soon were in a broad green alley

of the wood, with a new shelter of fir and pine on one hand, an old oak glade dipping down on the other. And among the oaks the blackberry moved in pools of leaves, under the new green boughs, upon a pale brown floor of oak-leaves. He found flowers for her.

"Here's a bit of new-mown hay," he said; then, again, he brought her *hepatica*-*corn*. And, again, his heart beat with love, seeing her hand, used with work, holding the little bunch of flowers he gave her. She was perfectly happy.

But at the end of the riding was a fence to climb. Paul was over in a second.

"Come," he said, "let me help you."

"No, go away. I will do it in my own way."

He stood below with his hands up ready to help her. She climbed cautiously.

"What a way to climb!" he exclaimed scornfully, when she was safely on earth again.

"Blasphemous!" she cried.

"Duffer of a little woman," he replied, "who can't get over 'em."

In front, along the edge of the wood, was a cluster of low red farm buildings. The two hurried forward. Flush with the wood was the apple orchard, whose blossom was falling on the grass-rooms. The pond was deep under a hedge and overhanging oak-trees. Some cows stood in the shade. The farm and buildings, three sides of a quadrangle, enclosed the sunshine towards the wood. It was very still.

Mother and son went into the small walled garden, where was a mass of red gillivies. By the open door were some heavy leaves, put out to cool. A hen was just coming to peck them. Then, in the doorway suddenly appeared a girl in a dirty apron. She was about fourteen years old, had a rose-dark face, a bunch of short black curls, very fine and close, and dark eyes; shy, questioning, a little reminiscent of the stranger, she disappeared. In a minute another figure appeared, a small, frail woman, rosy, with great dark brown eyes.

"Oh!" she exclaimed, smiling with a little glow, "you're come, then. I am glad to see you." Her voice was intimate and rather sad.

The two women shook hands.

"How are you now? we're not a bother to you?" said Mrs. Morel. "I know what a tiring life it is."

"Oh no! We're only too thankful to get a new face, it's so hot up here."

"I suppose so," said Mrs. Morel.

They were taken through into the parlor—a long, low room, with a great bunch of garden-roses in the fireplace. There the women talked, while Paul went out to survey the land. He was in the garden smelling the gillivens and looking at the plants, when the girl came out quickly to the heap of coal which stood by the door.

"I suppose these are cabbage-roses?" he said to her, pointing to the bushes along the fence.

She looked at him with startled, big brown eyes.

"I suppose they are cabbage-roses when they come out?" he said.

"I don't know," she faltered. "They're white with pink middles."

"Then they're maiden-blush."

Miriam flushed. She had a beautiful warm coloring.

"I don't know," she said.

"You don't have much in your garden," he said.

"This is our first year here," she answered, in a distant, rather superior way, drawing back and going indoors. He did not notice, but went his round of explanation. Presently his mother came out, and they went through the buildings. Paul was hugely delighted.

"And I suppose you have the foals and calves and pigs to look after?" said Mrs. Mabel to Mrs. Larsen.

"No," replied the little woman. "I can't find time to look after quite, and I've not used to it. It's as much as I can do to keep going in the house."

"Well, I suppose it is," said Mrs. Mabel.

Presently the girl came out.

"You is ready, mother," said she in a meek, quiet voice.

"Oh, thank you, Miriam, then we'll come," replied her mother, almost ingratiatingly. "Would you ever to have tea now, Mrs. Mabel?"

"Of course," said Mrs. Mabel. "Whenever it's ready."

Paul and his mother and Mrs. Larsen had tea together. Then they went out into the wood that was flooded with bluebells, while busy finger-men were in the park. The mother and son were in company together.

When they got back to the house, Mr. Larsen and Edgar, the eldest son, were in the kitchen. Edgar was about eighteen. Then Geoffrey and Maurice, big lads of twelve and thirteen, were in front school. Mr. Larsen was a good-looking man in the prime of life, with a golden-brown mustache, and blue eyes screwed up against the weather.

The boys were chattering, but Paul scarcely listened to

They went round the eggs, scrambling into all sorts of places. As they were feeding the hen Miriam came out. The boys took no notice of her. One hen, with her yellow chickens, was in a coop. Maurice took his head full of corn and let the hen peck from it.

"Daren you do it!" he asked of Paul.

"Let's see," said Paul.

He had a small hand, warm, and rather capable-looking. Miriam watched. He held the corn to the hen. The bird eyed it with her hard, bright eye, and suddenly made a peck into his hand. He started, and laughed. "Rap, rap, rap!" went the bird's beak in his palm. He laughed again, and the other boys joined.

"She knocks you, and nips you, but she never hurts," said Paul, when the last corn had gone.

"Now, Miriam," said Maurice, "you come an' 'ave a go."

"No," she cried, shrinking back.

"Hah! baby. The sturdy-ids!" said her brother.

"It doesn't hurt a bit," said Paul. "It only just nips rather staidy."

"No," she still cried, shaking her black curls and shrinking.

"She daren't," said Geoffrey. "She never daren't do anything except peck or poke poultry."

"Daren't jump off a gate, daren't twiddle, daren't go on a slide, daren't snap a girl hither' her. She can do nowt but go about thinkin' 'owst' somebody." "The Lady of the Lake," Yeh! "cried Maurice.

Miriam was crimson with shame and misery.

"I daren't do more than you," she cried. "You're never anything but cowards and bullies."

"Oh, cowards and bullies!" they repeated, mindfully, smacking her speech.

"Not such a chicken shall anger me,
A boar is scarcer staidy."

he quoted against her, shouting with laughter.

She went indoors. Paul went with the boys into the orchard, where they had rigged up a parallel bar. They did tests of strength. He was more agile than strong, but he served. He fagged a piece of apple-blissens that hung low on a swinging bough.

"I wouldn't get the apple-blissens," said Edgar, the eldest brother. "There'll be no apples next year."

"I wasn't going to get it," replied Paul, going away.

The boys let him be alone; they were more interested in their own pursuits. He wandered back to the house to look for his mother. As he went round the back, he saw Miriam kneeling in

feet of the hen-coop, came under to her hand, biting her lip, and crouching in an intense attitude. The hen was cying her wickedly. Very gingerly she put forward her hand. The hen looked at her. She drew back quickly with a cry, half of fear, half of chagrin.

"It won't hurt you," said Paul.

She flushed crimson and started up.

"I only wanted to try," she said in a low voice.

"See, it doesn't hurt," he said, and putting only two cents in his palm, he let the hen peck, peck, peck at his bare hand.

"It only makes you laugh," he said.

She put her hand forward, and dragged it away, tried again, and started back with a cry. He frowned.

"Why, I'd let her take care of my face," said Paul, "only she hurts a bit. She's ever so mean. If she wasn't, look how much ground she'd peck up every day."

He walked grimly, and watched. At last Miriam let the bird peck from her hand. She gave a loud cry—fear, and pain because of fear—rather pathetic. But she had done it, and she did it again.

"There, you see," said the boy. "It doesn't hurt, does it?"

She looked at him with dilated dark eyes.

"No," she laughed, trembling.

Then she ran and went indoors. She seemed to be in some very painful of the boy.

"He thinks I'm only a common girl," she thought, and she wanted to prove she was a grand person like the "Lady of the Lake."

Paul found his mother ready to go home. She smiled at her son. He took a great bunch of flowers. He and his. Lorette walked down the fields with them. The hills were golden with evening; deep in the wood shined the darkening purple of bluebells. It was everywhere perfectly still, save for the rustling of leaves and birds.

"But it is a beautiful place," said Mrs. Morel.

"Yes," answered his. Lorette; "it's a nice little place, if only it weren't for the rabbits. The pasture's blown down to nothing. I shame if ever I'll get the rest off it."

He clapped his hands, and the field broke into ravines near the woods, heaves rabbits hopping everywhere.

"Would you believe it!" exclaimed Mrs. Morel.

She and Paul went on alone together.

"Wasn't it lovely, mother?" he said quietly.

A thin moon was coming out. His heart was full of happiness all it hurt. His mother had to chatter, because she, too, wanted to cry with happiness.

"Now wouldn't I help that man!" she said. "Wouldn't I run to the flock and the young stock! And I'd leave to milk, and I'd talk with him, and I'd plan with him. My word, if I were his wife, the farm would be run, I know! But then, she hasn't the strength—she simply hasn't the strength. She ought never to have been burdened like it, you know. I'm sorry for her, and I'm sorry for him too. My word, if I'd had him, I shouldn't have thought him a bad husband! Not that she does either; and she's very lovable."

William came home again with his twentieth at the Whitman-tide. He had one week of his holidays done. It was beautiful weather. As a rule, William and Lily and Paul went out in the evening together for a walk. William did not talk to his beloved much, except to tell her things from his boyhood. Paul talked endlessly to both of them. They lay down, all three, in a meadow by Mission Church. On one side, by the Chuck Farm, was a beautiful spinning arena of poplars. Hawthorn was dropping from the hedges; penny daisies and rugged nobles were in the field, like laughter. William, a big fellow of twenty-three, shined now and even a bit queer, lay back in the sunshine and dreamed, while she fingered with his hair. Paul went gathering the big daisies. She had taken off her hat; her hair was black as a horse's mane. Paul came back and threaded daisies in her jet-black hair—big sprays of white and yellow, and just a pink touch of ragged robin.

"Now you look like a young black-woman," she lay said to him. "Doesn't she, William?"

Lily laughed. William opened his eyes and looked at her. In his gaze was a certain baffled look of misery and fierce appreciation.

"Has he made a sight of me?" she asked, laughing down at her lover.

"That he has!" said William, smiling.

He looked at her. Her beauty seemed to hurt him. He glanced at her flower-decked head and frowned.

"You look nice enough, if that's what you want to know," he said.

And she walked without her hat. In a little while William recovered, and was rather tender to her. Coming to a bridge, he carried her behind and he in a heart.

S. L. 90.

W. 44.

She watched his strong, nervous hand, with its gleaming hairs and knuckles, as he carved, and she seemed fascinated by it.

All the time there was a feeling of sadness and warmth, and a

crude undertaker in the house, whilst William and Lily were at home. But when he got irritable. She had brought, for an eight-days' stay, five dresses and six blouses.

"Oh, would you mind," she said to Annie, "washing me these two blouses, and these things?"

And Annie stood washing when William and Lily went out the next morning. Mrs. Mord was fatuous. And remembered the young man, catching a glimpse of his sweetheart's attitude towards his sister, hated her.

On Sunday morning she looked very beautiful in a dress of Eclair, silky and swaying, and blue as a jay-bird's feather, and in a large cotton hat covered with many roses, mostly crimson. Nobody could admire her enough. But in the evening, when she was going out, she asked again:

"Chabby, have you got my gloves?"

"Which?" asked William.

"My new black silk."

"No."

There was a burn. She had lost them.

"Look here, mother," said William, "that's the fourth pair she's lost since Christmas—at five shillings a pair!"

"You only gave me two of them," she remonstrated.

And in the evening, after supper, he stood on the hearth-rug whilst she sat on the sofa, and he seemed to hate her. In the afternoon he had left her whilst he went to see some old friend. She had not looked at a book. After supper William wanted to write a letter.

"Here is your book, Lily," said Mrs. Mord. "Would you care to go on with it for a few minutes?"

"No, thank you," said the girl. "I will sit still."

"But it is so dull."

William scribbled irritably at a great rate. As he sealed the envelope he said:

"Read a book! Why, she's never read a book in her life."

"Oh, go along!" said Mrs. Mord, cross with the exaggeration.

"It's true, mother—she hasn't," he said, jumping up and taking his old position on the hearth-rug. "She's never read a book in her life."

"It's like me," chimed in Mord. "I'll never see what there is in books, for all books' your name is 'yes' to, my mother and I."

"But you shouldn't say these things," said Mrs. Mord to her son.

"But it's just, mother—she won't read. What did you give her?"

"Well, I gave her a Sade thing of Anne's Susan's. Nobody wants to read dry stuff on Sunday afternoon."

"Well, I'll bet she didn't read ten lines of it."

"You are mistaken," said his mother.

All the time Lily sat miserably on the sofa. He turned to her with a smile.

"Did you read any?" he asked.

"Yes, I did," she replied.

"How much?"

"I don't know how many pages."

"Tell me one thing you read."

She could not.

She never got beyond the second page. He read a great deal, and had a quick, acute intelligence. She could understand nothing but love-making and chatter. He was accustomed to having all his thoughts sifted through his mother's mind; so, when he sensed companionship, and was asked in reply to be the killing and twisting knife, he hated his betrothed.

"You know, mother," he said, when he was alone with her at night, "she's no idea of money, she's so sweet-brained. When she's paid, she'll suddenly buy such rot as mirror glass, and then I have to buy her mirror-ticket, and her extras, even her underclothing. And she wants to get married, and I think myself we might as well get married next year. But at this rate——"

"A fair rate of a marriage it would be," replied his mother.

"I should consider it again, my boy."

"Oh, well, I've gone too far to break off now," he said, "and so I shall get married as soon as I can."

"Very well, my boy. If you will, you will, and she's no stopping you; but I tell you, I can't sleep when I think about it."

"Oh, she'll be all right, mother. We shall manage."

"And the hats you buy her underclothing?" asked his mother.

"Well," he began apologetically, "she didn't ask me; but one morning—and it was cold—I found her on the stairs shivering, not able to keep still; so I asked her if she was well wrapped up. She said: 'I think so.' So I said: 'Have you got warm underthings on?' And she said: 'No, they were rotten.' I asked her why on earth she hadn't got something thicker on in weather like that, and she said because she had nothing. And there she is—a bronchial subject! I had to take her and get some warm things. Well, mother, I shouldn't mind the money if we had any. And, you know, she ought to keep enough to pay for her attendance; but no, she comes to me about that, and I have to find the money."

"It's a poor lookout," said Mrs. Morel bitterly.

He was pale, and his rugged face, that used to be so perfectly careless and laughing, was stamped with conflict and despair.

"But I can't give her up now; it's gone too far," he said. "And besides, for some things I couldn't do without her."

"My lee, remember you're taking your life in your hands," said Mrs. Morel. "Nothing is so bad as a marriage that's a hopeless failure. Mine was bad enough, God knows, and ought to teach you something; but it might have been worse by a long chalk."

He leaned with his back against the side of the chimney-piece, his hands in his pockets. He was a big, raw-boned man, who looked as if he would go to the world's end if he wanted to. But she saw the despair on his face.

"I couldn't give her up now," he said.

"Well," she said, "remember there are worse wrongs than breaking off an engagement."

"I can't give her up now," he said.

The clock ticked on; mother and son remained in silence, a conflict between them; but he would say no more. At last she said:

"Well, go to bed, my son. You'll feel better in the morning, and perhaps you'll know better."

He kissed her, and went. She raised the fire. Her heart was heavy now as it had never been. Before, with her husband, things had seemed to be breaking down in her, but they did not destroy her power to live. Now her soul fit landed in itself. It was her hope that was struck.

And so often William manifested the same hatred towards his betrothed. On the last evening at home he was railing against her.

"Well," he said, "if you don't believe me, what she's like, would you believe she has been confirmed three times?"

"Confirmed?" laughed Mrs. Morel.

"Nonsense or no, she has! That's what confirmation means for her—a bit of a theatrical show where she can cut a figure."

"I haven't, Mrs. Morel!" cried the girl—"I haven't! it is not true!"

"What!" he cried, flushing round on her. "Once in Bromley, once in Beckenham, and once somewhere else."

"Nowhere else!" she said, in scorn—"nowhere else!"

"It was! And if it wasn't, why were you confirmed twice?"

"Once I was only fourteen, Mrs. Morel," she pleaded, tears in her eyes.

"Yes," said Mrs. Morel; "I can quite understand it, child. Take no notice of him. You ought to be ashamed, William, saying such things."

"But it's true. She's religious—she had blue velvet Prayer-Books—and she's not at much religion, or anything else, in her than that table-top. She's confessed three times for doing, to show herself off, and that's how she is in everything—everything!"

The girl sat on the sofa, crying. She was not wrong.

"As for that!" he cried, "you might as well ask a fly to love you! It'll love nothing as you——"

"Now, say no more," commanded Mrs. Morel. "If you want to say those things, you must find another place than this. I am ashamed of you William! Why don't you be more manly. To do nothing but find fault with a girl, and then pretend you've engaged to her!"

Mrs. Morel rebuked in wrath and indignation.

William was silent, and later he repented, listed and comforted the girl. Yet it was true, what he had said. He hated her.

When they were going away, Mrs. Morel accompanied them as far as Nottingham. It was a long way in Keweenaw train.

"You know, mother," he said to her, "Gyp's shallow. Nothing goes deep with her."

"William, I wish you wouldn't say those things," said Mrs. Morel, very uncomfortable for the girl who walked beside her.

"But it doesn't, mother. She's very much in love with me now, but if I died she'd have forgotten me in three months."

Mrs. Morel was afraid. Her heart beat furiously, hearing the quiet bitterness of her son's last speech.

"How do you know?" she replied. "You don't know, and therefore you've no right to say such a thing."

"He's always saying those things!" cried the girl.

"In three months after I was buried you'd have forgotten me, and I should be forgotten," he said. "And that's your love!"

Mrs. Morel saw them face the train in Nottingham, then she returned home.

"There's one comfort," she said to Paul—"he'll never have any money to marry on, that I am sure of. And so she'll love him that way."

So she took cheer. Matters were not yet very desperate. She finally believed William would never marry his Gyp. She waited, and she kept Paul near to her.

After receiving William's letters had a feverish tone; he seemed unnatural and intense. Sometimes he was exaggeratedly jolly, usually he was flat and bitter in his letters.

"Ay," his mother said, "I'm afraid he's railing himself against that creature, who isn't worthy of his love—no, no more than a rag doll."

DEATH IN THE FAMILY

He wanted to come home. The midsummer holiday was gone; it was a long while to Christmas. His work in wild excitement, saying he could come for Saturday and Sunday at Queen Fair, the first week in October.

"You are not well, my boy," said his mother, when she saw him.

She was almost in tears at having him so herself again.

"No, I've not been well," he said. "I've started to have a dragging cold all the last month, but it's going, I think."

It was rainy October weather. He seemed wild with joy, like a schoolboy escapes; then again he was silent and reserved. He was much graver than ever, and there was a haggard look in his eyes.

"You are doing too much," said his mother to him.

He was doing extra work, trying to make some money to marry on, he said. He only talked to his mother once on the Saturday night; then he was sad and tender about his beloved.

"And yet, you know, mother, for all that, if I died she'd be broken-hearted for two months, and then she'd start to forget me. You'd see, she'd never come home here to look at my grave, not even once."

"Why, William," said his mother, "you're not going to die, so why talk about it?"

"But whether or not——" he replied.

"And she can't help it. She is like that, and if you choose her—well, you can't grumble," said his mother.

On the Sunday morning, as he was putting his collar on:

"Look," he said to his mother, holding up his chin, "what a rash my collar's made under my chin!"

Just at the junction of chin and throat was a big red inflammation.

"It ought not to do that," said his mother. "Here, put a bit of this something ointment on. You should wear different collars."

He went away on Sunday midnight, seeming better and more solid for his two days at home.

On Tuesday morning came a telegram from London that he was ill. Mrs. Morel got off her knees from waiting the floor, read the telegram, called a neighbour, went to her landlady and borrowed a travois, put on her things, and set off. She hurried on Keston, caught an express for London in Nottingham. She had to wait in Nottingham nearly an hour. A small figure in her black bonnet, she was vainly asking the porters if they knew how to get to Euston Road. The journey was three hours. She sat in her corner in a kind of stupor, never moving. At King's Cross still no one could tell her how to get to Euston Road. Chattering her teeth

bag, that revealed her nightdress, comb and brush, she went from person to person. At last they sent her underground to Cannon Street.

It was six o'clock when she arrived at William's lodging. The blinds were not down.

"How is he?" she asked.

"No better," said the landlady.

She followed the woman upstairs. William lay on the bed, with bloodshot eyes, his face rather discoloured. The clothes were tossed about, there was no fire in the room, a glass of milk stood on the stand at his bedside. No one had been with him.

"Why, my son!" said the mother bravely.

He did not answer. He looked at her, but did not see her. Then he began to cry, in a dull voice, as if repeating a lesson from dictation: "Owing to a leakage in the hold of this vessel, the sugar has rot, and become converted into molasses. It needed heating——"

He was quite unconscious. It had been his business to examine some such cargo of sugar in the Port of London.

"How long has he been like this?" the mother asked the landlady.

"He got home at six o'clock on Monday morning, and he seemed to sleep all day; then in the night we heard him talking, and this morning he asked for you. So I waked, and we fetched the doctor."

"Will you have a few more?"

Mrs. Morel tried to soothe her son, to keep him still.

The doctor came. It was pneumonia, and, he said, a peculiar erysipelas, which had started under the skin where the collar chafed, and was spreading over the face. He hoped it would not get to the brain.

Mrs. Morel settled down to nurse. She prayed for William, prayed that he would recognise her. But the young man's face grew more discoloured. In the night she struggled with him. He reviled, and roared, and would not come to consciousness. At two o'clock, in a dreadful paroxysm, he died.

Mrs. Morel sat perfectly still for an hour in the lodging bedroom; then she roused the household.

At six o'clock, with the aid of the charwoman, she laid him out; then she went round the dreary London village to the registrar and the doctor.

At about o'clock in the evening as Sweepil Street came another rain:

"William died last night. Let father come, bring money."

Annie, Paul, and Arthur were at home; Mr. Morel was gone to

work. The three children said not a word. Annie began to whisper with Paul; Paul set off for his father.

It was a beautiful day. At Brimsley pit the white steam rolled slowly in the sunshine of a soft blue sky; the wheels of the hand-carts rattled high up; the screen, shuffling its coal into the trucks, made a busy noise.

"I want my father; he's got to go to London," said the boy to the first man he met on the bank.

"The name Walter Morel? (Is he there or) tell Joe Ward."

Paul went into the little top office.

"I want my father; he's got to go to London."

"They say he's dead? What's his name?"

"Mr. Morel."

"What, Walter? Is over and?"

"He's got to go to London."

The man went to the telephone and rang up the bottom office.

"Walter Morel's wanted. Number 42, Street. Foreman's saying there's his last hour."

Then he turned round to Paul.

"He'll be up in a few minutes," he said.

Paul wandered out to the pit-top. He watched the chair come up, with its wagon of coal. The great iron cage sank back on its run, a full bucket was hoisted up, an empty bucket ran on to the chair, a bell ting'd somewhere, the chair heaved, then dropped like a stone.

Paul did not realize William was dead; it was impossible, with such a bustle going on. The puller-off waving the small truck on to the turn-table, another man ran with it along the bank down the curving line.

"And William is dead, and my mother's in London, and what will she be doing?" the boy asked Morel, as if it were a commonplace.

He watched chair after chair come up, and still no father. At last, standing beside a wagon, a man's form! The chair sank on its run, Morel stepped off. He was slightly lame from an accident.

"Is it there, Paul? Is he worse?"

"You've got to go to London."

The two walked off the pit-bank, where men were watching curiously. As they came out and went along the railway, with the sunny autumn field on one side and a wall of trucks on the other, Morel said in a frightened voice:

"It's never gone, this?"

"Yes."

"When was't?"

The miner's voice was terrified.

"Last night. We had a telegram from my mother."

Morrel waited on a few strides, then leaned up against a truck side, his hand over his eyes. He was not crying. Paul stood looking round, waiting. On the weighing-machine a truck rumbled slowly. Paul saw everything, except his father leaning against the truck as if he were tired.

Morrel had only once before been in London. He set off, scared and peaked, to help his wife. That was on Tuesday. The children were left alone in the house. Paul went to work, Arthur went to school, and Annie had in a friend to be with her.

On Saturday night, as Paul was turning the corner, coming home from Kinton, he saw his mother and father, who had come to Sunday Bridge Station. They were walking in silence in the dark, tired, struggling apart. The boy waited.

"Mother!" he cried, in the darkness.

Mrs. Morrel's small figure seemed not to observe. He spoke again.

"Paul!" she said, unconsciously.

She let him kiss her, but she turned unaware of him.

In the house she was the same—small, white, and mute. She noticed nothing, she said nothing, only:

"The coffin will be here to-night, Walter. You'd better see about some help." Then, turning to the children: "We're bringing him home."

Then she relapsed into the same mute looking into space, her hands folded on her lap. Paul, looking at her, felt he could not breathe. The house was dead silent.

"I went to work, mother," he said plaintively.

"Did you?" she answered, dull.

After half an hour blind, troubled and bewildered, came in again.

"Where'll we be's him when he does come?" he asked his wife.

"In the front-room."

"Then I'd better shift th' table?"

"Yes."

"An' he's kin across th' chairs?"

"You know there—— You, I suppose so."

Morrel and Paul went, with a candle, into the parlour. There was no gas there. The father unrolled the top of the big mahogany oval table, and cleared the middle of the room, then he arranged the chairs opposite each other, so that the coffin could stand on their beds.

"You never seed such a length as he is!" said the miner, and watching anxiously as he worked.

DEATH IN THE FAMILY

Paul went to the bay window and looked out. The sub-zero wind snarled and black in front of the wide darkness. It was a faintly luminous night. Paul went back to his mother.

At ten o'clock Mord called:

"He's here!"

Everyone started. There was a noise of unbaring and unlocking the front door, which opened straight from the night into the room.

"Bring another candle," called Mord.

Annie and Arthur went. Paul followed with his mother. He stood with his arm round her waist in the lower doorway. Down the middle of the dimmed room waited six chairs, three to each. In the window, against the lace curtains, Arthur held up one candle, and by the open door, against the night, Annie stood holding forward, her hands candlestick glittering.

There was the noise of wheels. Outside in the darkness of the street below Paul could see horses and a black vehicle, one lamp and a few pale faces; then some men, unseen, all in their shirt-sleeves, seemed to struggle in the obscurity. Heavily two men appeared, bowed beneath a great weight. It was Mord and his neighbors.

"Steady!" called Mord, out of breath.

He and his fellow assumed the steep garden step, heaved into the candle-light with their gleaming rollers. Loads of other men were seen struggling behind. Mord and Burns, in front, staggered; the great dark weight wavered.

"Steady, steady!" cried Mord, as if in pain.

All the six heaves were up in the small garden, holding the great coffin aloft. There were three more steps to the door. The yellow lamp of the carriage shone alone down in the black road.

"Now then!" said Mord.

The coffin wavered, the men began to mount the three steps with their load. Annie's candle flickered, and she whimpered as the last men appeared, and the limbs and bowed heads of six men struggled to climb into the room, bearing the coffin that rode like a corpse on their living flesh.

"Oh, my son—my son!" Mrs. Mord rang softly, and each time the coffin swung to the unspoken clinking of the men: "Oh, my son—my son—my son!"

"Mother!" Paul whispered, his hand round her waist.

"Mother!"

She did not hear.

"Oh, my son—my son!" she repeated.

Paul saw drops of sweat fall from his father's brow. His men were in the room—in confusion now, with shivering, struggling limbs, filling the room and knocking against the furniture. The coffin roared, and was gently lowered on to the chair. The sweat fell from Morel's face on its boards.

"My word, he's a weight!" said a man, and the five miners sighed, bowed, and, wincing with the struggle, dismounted the rope again, closing the door behind them.

The family was alone in the parlour with the great polished box. William, when laid out, was six feet four inches long. Like a monument lay the height beaver, ponderous coffin. Paul thought it would never be got out of the room again. His mother was striking the polished wood.

They buried him on the Monday in the little cemetery on the hillside that looks over the fields at the big church and the houses. It was sunny, and the white daphnodermons filled themselves in the warmth.

Mrs. Morel could not be persuaded, after this, to talk and talk for old bright hours in life. She remained shut off. All the way home in the train she had said to herself: "If only it could have been rest!"

When Paul came home at night he found his mother sitting, her day's work done, with hands folded in her lap upon her knees apart. She always used to have changed her dress and put on a black apron, before. Now Annie sat at supper, and his mother sat looking blankly in front of her, her mouth shut tight. Then he bent his head to tell her.

"Mother, Miss Jordan was down to-day, and she said my sketch of a gallery at work was beautiful."

But Mrs. Morel took no notice. Night after night he forced himself to tell her things, although she did not listen. It drove him almost insane to have her shut. At last:

"What's a matter, mother?" he asked.

She did not hear.

"What's a matter?" he persisted. "Mother, what's a matter?"

"You know what's the matter," she said infinitely, turning away.

The lad—he was sixteen years old—went to bed drowsily. He was out off and wrenched through October, November, and December. His mother cried, but she could not rouse herself. She could only keep on her dead sea; he had been let to die so cruelly.

At last, on December 25, with his five shillings Christmas-box in his pocket, Paul wandered blindly home. His mother looked at him, and her heart stood still.

DEATH IN THE FAMILY

"What's the matter?" she asked.

"I'm badly, mother!" he replied. "Mr. Jordan gave me five shillings for a Christmas-box!"

He handed it to her with trembling hands. She put it on the table.

"You aren't glad!" he reproached her; but he trembled violently.

"What hurts you?" she said, unbuttoning his overcoat.

It was the old question.

"I feel badly, mother."

She undressed him and put him to bed. He had pneumonia dangerously, the doctor said.

"Might he never have had it if I'd kept him at home, not let him go to Nottingham?" was one of the first things she asked.

"He might not have been so bad," said the doctor.

Mrs. Moor stood transfixed on her own ground.

"I should have watched the living, not the dead," she told herself.

Paul was very ill. His mother lay in bed at night with him; they could not afford a nurse. He grew worse, and the crisis approached. One night he tossed into consciousness in the ghastly, cold feeling of dissolution, when all the cells in the body seem to labour insistently to be breaking down, and consciousness makes a last flare of struggle, like madness.

"I'll die, mother!" he cried, heaving for breath on the pillow.

She lifted him up, crying in a small voice:

"Oh, my son—my son!"

That brought him to. He realised her. His whole will rose up and assisted him. He put his head on her breast, and took care of her for love.

"For some things," said his aunt, "it was a good thing Paul was ill that Christmas. I believe it saved his mother."

Paul was in bed for seven weeks. He got up white and fragile. His father had bought him a pair of scarlet and gold valises. They used to flame in the window in the March sunshine as he sat on the sofa chatting to his mother. The two knitted together in perfect harmony. Mrs. Moor's life now centred itself in Paul.

William had been a prophet. Mrs. Moor had a little present and a letter from Lily at Christmas. Mrs. Moor's sister had a letter at the New Year.

"I was at a ball last night. Some delightful people were there, and I enjoyed myself thoroughly," said the letter. "I had every dance—did not sit out one."

Mrs. Moor never heard any more of her.

SONS AND LOVERS

Moor and his wife were gentle with each other for some time after the death of their son. He would go into a kind of daze, staring wide-eyed and blank across the room. Then he got up suddenly and hurried out to the Thessalon, returning in his normal state. But never in his life would he go for a walk up Skopjean, past the office where his son had worked, and he always avoided the cemetery.

PART TWO

Lord-and-Girl Love

Peter had been many times up to Willey Farm during the summer. He was friends with the two youngest boys. Edgar the eldest, would not condescend to him. And Miriam also refused to be approached. She was afraid of being out at night, as by her own brothers. The girl was romantic in her soul. Everywhere was a Walter Scott heroism being loved by men with helmets or with plumes in their caps. She herself was something of a princess turned into a swine-girl in her own imagination. And she was afraid lest this boy, who, nevertheless, looked something like a Walter Scott hero, who could paint and speak French, and knew what *algebra* meant, and who went by train to Nottingham every day, might consider her simply as the swine-girl, unable to perceive the princess beneath; so she held aloof.

Her great companion was her mother. They were both brown-eyed, and inclined to be mystical, such women as treasure religion inside doors, breathe it in their nostrils, and see the whole of life in a rift thereof. So to Miriam, Christ and God made one great figure, which she loved tremblingly and passionately when a tremendous sunset burned out the western sky, and Editha, and Lucy, and Rowena, Brian de Bois Guilbert, Rob Roy, and Guy Risswings, sailed the sunny leaves in the morning, or sat in her bedroom closet, alone, when it snowed. That was life to her. For the rest she drugged in the lazes, which work she would not have minded had not her clean red face been smacked up immediately by the trampling bare-boots of her brothers. She manfully warned her little brother of Ross to let her smudge him and vilify him in her love; she went to church reverently, with bowed head, and quivered in anguish from the vulgarity of the other choir-girls and from the common-sounding voice of the curate; she fought with her brothers, whom she considered brutal louts; and she held out her father in too high esteem because he did not carry any mystical ideals cherished in his heart, but only wanted to have as many a shill as he could, and his meals when he was ready for them.

She hated her position as swine-girl. She wanted to be con-

valued. She wanted to learn, thinking that if she could read, as Paul said he could read, *Colombo*, or the *Pooge* paper she was *Cherokee*, the world would have a different face for her and a deepened respect. She could not be prisoned by wealth or standing. So she was used to have learning wherever to pride herself. For she was different from other folk, and must not be scooped up among the common fry. Learning was the only distinction in which she thought to excel.

Her beauty—that of a shy, wild, quivering sensitive thing—meant nothing to her. Even her soul, so strong for cheapness, was not enough. She must have something to relieve her pride, because she felt different from other people. Paul she eyed rather curiously. On the whole, she scorned the male sex. But here was a new specimen, quick, light, graceful, who could be gentle and who could be wild, and who was clever, and who knew a lot, and who had a death in the family. The boy's poor record of learning excited her almost day-high in her esteem. Yet she tried hard to scorn him, because he would not set in her the prison but only the white-girl. And he scarcely observed her.

Then he was so ill, and she felt he would be weak. Then she would be stronger than he. Then she could love him. If she could be mistress of him in his weakness, take part of him, if he could depend on her, if she could, as it were, have him in her arms, how she would love him!

As soon as the skin brightened and plum-blossom was out, Paul drove off in the millman's heavy boat up to Willey Farm. Mr. Levens showed in a kindly fashion to the boy, then clicked to the horse as they climbed the hill slowly, in the freshness of the morning. White clouds went on their way, crowding to the back of the hills that were rising in the spring-fires. The water of Nehamara lay below, very blue against the started meadows and the dorm-trees.

It was four and a half miles' drive. Tiny beds on the bridges, vivid as copper-green, were opening into rivers; and thrushes called, and blackbirds shrieked and scolded. It was a new, glamorous world.

Miriam, peeping through the kitchen window, saw the horse walk through the big white gate into the farmyard that was backed by the silver-wood, will trees. Then a youth in a heavy overcoat dismounted. He put up his hands for the whip and the rug that the good-looking, ruddy farmer handed down to him.

Miriam appeared in the doorway. She was nearly sixteen, very beautiful, with her wavy coloring, her gravity, her eyes shining suddenly like an ecstasy.

"I say," said Paul, turning shyly aside, "your daffodils are nearly out. Isn't it early? But don't they look odd?"

"Odd?" said Miriam, in her moment, evening voice.

"The green on their heads——" and he faltered less slowly finally.

"Let me take the rug," said Miriam over-gently.

"I can carry it," he answered, rather injured. But he yielded to her.

Then Mrs. Leivers appeared.

"I'm sure you're tired and cold," she said. "Let me take your coat. It is heavy. You mustn't walk far in it."

She helped him off with his coat. He was quite unused to such attention. She was almost smothered under its weight.

"Why, mother," laughed the farmer as he passed through the kitchen, swinging the great milk-churns, "you've got almost more than you can manage there."

She beat up the sofa cushions for the youth.

The kitchen was very small and irregular. The fire had been originally a labourer's cottage. And the furniture was old and battered. But Paul loved it—loved the washing slates formed the hearthrug, and the funny little corner under the stairs, and the small window deep in the corner, through which, bending a little, he could see the plum-tree in the back-garden and the lovely round hills beyond.

"Won't you lie down?" said Mrs. Leivers.

"Oh no; I'm not tired," he said. "Isn't it lovely coming out, don't you think? I saw a dog-bush in blossom and a lot of catkins. I'm glad it's early."

"Can I give you something to eat or to drink?"

"No, thank you."

"How's your mother?"

"I think she's tired now. I think she's had too much to do. Perhaps in a little while she'll go to Sileghness with me. Then she'll be able to rest. I'll be glad of the car."

"Yes," replied Mrs. Leivers. "It's a wonder she isn't ill herself."

Miriam was moving about preparing dinner. Paul watched everything that happened. His face was pale and thin, but his eyes were quick and bright with life as ever. He watched the strange, almost chaotic way in which the girl moved about, carrying a great water-jar to the oven, or looking in the saucepan. The atmosphere was different from that of his own home, where everything seemed so ordinary. When Mr. Leivers called loudly outside to the horse, that was reaching over to feed on the corn-

looked in the garden, the girl stared, looked round with dark eyes, as if something had come beating in on her world. There was a sense of silence inside the house and out. Miriam seemed as if some dreamy tale, a maiden in bondage, her spirit detaching in a land far away and magical. And her discoloured, old blue frock and her broken boots seemed only fit the separate rags of King Cophelua's beggar-maid.

She suddenly became aware of his keen blue eyes upon her, taking her all in. Instantly her broken boots and her faded old frock hurt her. She resented his seeing everything. Even he knew that her stocking was not pulled up. She went into the walkery, blushing deeply. And afterwards her hands trembled slightly as her work. She nearly dropped all she handled. When her inside dream was shaken, her body quivered with repulsion. She covered that he saw so much.

Mrs. Lefevre sat for some time talking to the boy, although she was needed at her work. She was too polite to leave him. Presently she resumed herself and room. After a while she looked into the tin newspaper.

"Oh dear, Miriam," she cried, "these potatoes have boiled dry!"

Miriam started as if she had been stung.

"How dry, mother?" she asked.

"I shouldn't care, Miriam," said the mother, "if I hadn't wasted them to you." She peered into the pan.

The girl suffered as if from a blow. Her dark eyes dilated; she remained standing in the same spot.

"Well," she answered, gripped tight in self-conscious shame,

"I'm sure I looked at them five minutes since!"

"Yes," said the mother, "I know it's really done."

"They're not much burned," said Paul. "It doesn't matter, does it?"

Mrs. Lefevre looked at the youth with her brown, hurt eyes.

"It wouldn't matter but for the boys," she said to him. "Only Miriam knows what a trouble they make if the potatoes are 'naughty'."

"Then," thought Paul to himself, "you shouldn't let them make a trouble."

After a while Edgar came in. He wore leggings, and his boots were covered with earth. He was rather small, rather formal, for a farmer. He glanced at Paul, nodded to Mrs. Lefevre, and said:

"Dinner ready?"

"Nearly, Edgar," replied the mother apologetically.

"I'm ready for mine," said the young man, taking up the

newspaper and reading. Presently the rest of the family trooped in. Dinner was served. The meal went rather heavily. The over-generous and apologetic tone of the mother brought out all the brutality of manners in the sons. Edgar tasted the potatoes, moved his mouth quickly like a rabbit, looked indignantly at his mother, and said:

"Those potatoes are burnt, mother."

"Yes, Edgar. I forgot them for a minute. Perhaps you'll have bread if you can't eat them."

Edgar looked in anger across at Miriam.

"What was Miriam doing that she couldn't watch to them?" he said.

Miriam looked up. Her mouth opened, her dark eyes blazed and widened, but she said nothing. She swallowed her anger and her shame, bowed her dark head.

"I'm sure she was trying hard," said the mother.

"She hasn't got sense even to boil the potatoes," said Edgar. "What is she kept at home for?"

"Oh, for making everything that's left in the pantry," said Miriam.

"They don't forget that potato-pie against our Miriam," laughed the father.

She was utterly humiliated. The mother sat in silence, suffering, like some saint out of place at the brutal board.

It puzzled Paul. He wondered vaguely why all this intense feeling was running because of a few burnt potatoes. The mother mailed everything—even a bit of housework—in the name of a religious trust. The sons resented this; they felt themselves cut away underneath, and they answered with brutality and also with a sneering superciliousness.

Paul was just opening out from childhood into manhood. This atmosphere, where everything took a religious value, came with a subtle inclination to him. There was something in the air. His own mother was logical. Here there was something different, something he loved, something that at times he hated.

Miriam quarrelled with her brothers furiously. Later in the afternoon, when they had gone away again, her mother said:

"You disappointed us in dinner-time, Miriam."

The girl dropped her head.

"They are such brats!" she suddenly cried, looking up with flashing eyes.

"But hadn't you promised not to answer them?" said the mother. "And I believed in you. I can't stand it when you wrangle."

"But they're so hateful!" cried Miriam, "and—and too."

"Yes, dear. But how often have I asked you not to answer Edgar back? Can't you let him say what he likes?"

"But why should he say what he likes?"

"Aren't you strong enough to bear it, Miriam, if even for my sake? And you so weak that you must wrangle with them?"

Mrs. Leivers stuck unflinchingly to this doctrine of "the other cheek." She could not instil in at all into the boys. With the girls she succeeded better, and Miriam was the child of her heart. The boys loathed the other cheek when it was presented to them. Miriam was often sufficiently silly to earn it. Then they spat on her and hated her. But she walked in her good humility, living within herself.

There was always this feeling of jungle and discord in the Leivers family. Although the boys reacted so bitterly this earned appeal to their deeper feelings of indignation and proud humility, yet it had its effect on them. They could not establish between themselves and an outsider just the ordinary human feeling and unimagined friendship; they were always restless for the something deeper. Ordinary folk seemed shallow to them, trivial and knowable. And so they were uncommunicative, painfully aware in the simplest social intercourse, suffering, and yet happiest in their superiority. Thus beneath was the yearning for the soul-intimacy to which they could not attain because they were too dumb, and every approach to close connection was blocked by their clumsy contempt of other people. They wanted genuine intimacy, but they could not get even normally near to anyone, because they seemed to take the first steps, they scorned the intimacy which forms common human intercourse.

Paul fell under Mrs. Leivers' spell. Everything had a religious and sanctified meaning when he was with her. His soul, hard, highly developed, sought her as if for nourishment. Together they seemed to lift the vital fact from an experience.

Miriam was her mother's daughter. In the sunshine of the afternoon mother and daughter went down the fields with him. They looked far away. There was a jenny wren's in the hedge by the orchard.

"I do want you to see this," said Mrs. Leivers.

He crouched down and carefully put his finger through the thorns into the round cone of the nest.

"It's almost as if you were feeling inside the live body of the bird," he said, "it's so warm. They say a bird makes its nest round like a cup with pressing its breast on it. Then how did it make the ceiling round, I wonder?"

The east seemed to stare into life for the two women. After that, Miriam came to see it every day. It seemed to close to her. Again, going down the backside with the girl, he noticed the colonnades, sculptured cylinders of gold, on the side of the ditch.

"I like them," he said, "when their petals go flat back with the sunblades. They seem to be proving themselves in the sun."

And then the colonnades were after close her with a little spell. Andropomphic as the was, she introduced him into appreciating things thus, and then they lived for her. She seemed to need things finding in her imagination as in her soul before she fit she had them. And she was cut off from ordinary life by her religious intensity which made the world for her. After a nursery garden or a paradise, where sin and knowledge were not, or else an ugly, cruel thing.

So it was in this atmosphere of subtle intimacy, this meeting in their common feeling for something in Nature, that their love started.

Personally, he was a long time before he realized her. For ten months he had to stay at home after his illness. For a while he went to Shropshire with his mother, and was perfectly happy. But even from the outside he wore long letters to Mrs. Lovens about the shore and the sea. And he brought back his beloved stretches of the fine Lincoln coast, anxious for them to see. Almost they would interrupt the Lovens more than they interrupted his mother. It was not his art Mrs. Morel cared about; it was himself and his achievement. But Mrs. Lovens and her children were almost his disciples. They studied him and made him glow to his work, whereas his mother's influence was to make him quietly determined, patient, dogged, unswerving.

He was friends with the boys, whose mothers was only superficial. They had all, when they could trust themselves, a strange gentleness and loneliness.

"Will you come with me on to the fallow?" asked Edgar rather hesitatingly.

Paul went joyfully, and spent the afternoon helping to hoe or to single turnips with his friend. He used to lie with the three brothers in the hay piled up in the barn and tell them about Nottingham and about Juddah's. In autumn, they taught him to milk, and let him do little jobs—chopping hay or pulping turnips—just as much as he liked. At mid-summer he worked all through hay-harvest with them, and then he loved them. The family was so not off from the world actually. They seemed, sometimes, like "the garden like a flower race spindle." Though the beds were

strong and healthy, yet they had all that over-sensitiveness and hanging-back which made them so lovely, yet also such close, jealous friends since their intimacy was won. Paul loved them dearly, and they him.

Miriam came later. But he had come into her life before she made any mark on his. One dull afternoon, when the men were on the land and the rest at school, only Miriam and her mother at home, the girl said to him, after having hesitated for some time:

"Have you seen the swing?"

"No," he answered. "Where?"

"In the crooked," she replied.

She always hesitated to offer or to show him anything. Men have such different standards of worth from women, and her dear things—the valuable things to her—her brothers had so often snatched or looted.

"Come on, then," he replied, jumping up.

There were two cowsheds, one on either side of the barn. In the lower, darker shed there was standing for four cows. From the galling over the manger-wall to the youth and girl went forward for the great thick rope which hung from the beam in the darkness overhead, and was pushed back over a peg in the wall.

"It's something like a rope!" he exclaimed enthusiastically; and he sat down on it, anxious to try it. Then immediately he rose.

"Come on, then, and have first go," he said to the girl.

"See," she answered, going into the barn, "we put some bags on the seat"; and she made the swing comfortable for him. That gave her pleasure. He held the rope.

"Come on, then," he said to her.

"No, I won't go first," she answered.

She stood aside in her still, sleep-fashion.

"Why?"

"You go," she pleaded.

Almost for the first time in her life she had the pleasure of giving up to a man, of spoiling him. Paul looked at her.

"All right," he said, sitting down. "Mind out!"

He sat off with a spring, and in a moment was flying through the air, almost out of the door of the shed, the upper half of which was open, showing outside the drizzling rain, the filthy yard, the cowie standing disconsolate against the black cartshed, and at the back of all the grey-green wall of the wood. She stood before in her crimson tunic-of-shame and watched. He looked at her, and she saw his blue eyes sparkling.

"It's a treat of a swing," he said.

"Yes."

He was swinging through the air, every bit of him swinging. Like a bird that swings for joy of movement. And he looked down at her. Her crimson cap hung over her dark curls, her beautiful warm face, so still in a kind of brooding, was lifted towards him. It was dark and rather cold in the shed. Suddenly a swallow came down from the high roof and darted out of the door.

"I didn't know a bird was swinging," he called.

He swung negligently. She could find him falling and rising through the air, as if he were lying on some force.

"Now I'll die," he said, in a detached, dreamy voice, as though he were the dying vision of the swing. She watched him, fascinated. Suddenly he put on the brake and jumped out.

"I've had a long run," he said. "But it's a treat of a swing—it's a treat of a swing!"

Alfalfa was amazed that he took a swing so seriously and did so wisely over it.

"No, you go on," she said.

"Why, don't you want one?" he asked, astonished.

"Well, not much. I'll have just a little."

She sat down, while he kept the bags in place for her.

"It's so ripping!" he said, setting her in motion. "Keep your back up, so they'll hang the manger-wall."

She felt the accuracy with which he caught her, exactly at the right moment, and the exactly proportionate strength of his thrust, and she was afraid. Down to her bowels went the hot wave of fear. She was in his hands. Again, firm and inevitable over the throat at the right moment. She gripped the rope, almost sweating.

"Ha!" she laughed in fear. "No higher!"

"But you're not a bit high," he remonstrated.

"But no higher!"

He heard the fear in her voice, and desisted. Her heart melted in hot pain when the moment came for him to thrust her forward again. But he left her alone. She began to breathe.

"Wasn't you really go any farther?" he asked. "Should I keep you there?"

"No, let me go by myself," she answered.

He moved aside and watched her.

"Why, you're scarcely moving," he said.

She laughed slightly with shame, and in a moment got down.

"They say if you can swing you won't be sickish," he said, as he moved again. "I don't believe I should ever be sickish."

Away he went. There was something fascinating to her in him. For the moment he was nothing but a piece of swinging stuff; not a particle of him that did not swing. She could never lose the

himself so, one could hear breath. It seemed a warmth in her. It was almost as if he were a flame that had lit a warmth in her while he swung in the middle air.

And gradually the intimacy with the family concentrated for Paul on three persons—the mother, Edgar, and Miriam. To the mother he went for that sympathy and that appeal which seemed to draw him out. Edgar was his very close friend. And to Miriam he more or less confided, because she seemed so humble.

But the girl gradually sought him out. If he brought up his sketch-book, it was she who pondered longest over the last picture. Then she would look up at him. Suddenly, her dark eyes afloat like water that shivers with a stream of gold in the dark, she would ask:

"Why do I like this so?"

Always something in his breast shook from those close, intimate, puzzled looks of hers.

"Why do you?" he asked.

"I don't know. It seems so true."

"It's because—well, because there is exactly any shadow in it; it's more shadowy, as if I'd painted the shadowing prototypes in the heavens and everywhere, and not the outlines of the shape. That seems dead to me. Only this shadowiness is the real living. The shape is a dead crust. The shadow is inside really."

And she, with her little finger in her mouth, would ponder these sayings. They gave her a feeling of life again, and vivid things which had meant nothing to her. She managed to find some meaning in his struggling, abstract speeches. And they were the medium through which she came directly at her beloved object.

Another day she sat at sunset while he was painting some pine-trees which caught the red glare from the west. He had been quiet.

"There you are!" he said suddenly. "I wanted that. Now, look at them and tell me, are they pine-trees or are they red coals, standing-up pieces of fire in that darkness? That's God's burning bush for you, that burned not away!"

Miriam looked, and was frightened. But the pine-trees were wonderful to her, and distinct. He picked his box and ran. Suddenly he looked at her.

"Why are you always sad?" he asked her.

"Sad?" she exclaimed, looking up at him with startled, wonderful brown eyes.

"Yes," he replied. "You are always, always sad."

"I am not—oh, not a bit!" she cried.

"But even your joy is like a flame coming off of sadness," he persisted. "You're never jolly, or even just all right."

"No," she persisted. "I wonder—why?"

"Because you're not; because you're different inside, like a pine-tree, and then you flare up; but you're not just like an ordinary tree, with edgely leaves and jolly——"

He got tangled up in his own speech; but she brooded on it, and he had a strange, roused sensation, as if his feelings were new. She got so near to him. It was a strange stimulus.

Then sometimes he hated her. Her younger brother was only five. He was a frail lad, with immense brown eyes in his quiet fragile face—one of Reynolds's "Choir of Angels," with a touch of old Otter Miriam handed to the child and dove him to her.

"Eh, my Hubert!" she sang, in a voice heavy and overcharged with love. "Eh, my Hubert!"

And, holding him in her arms, she swayed slightly from side to side with love, her face half closed, her eyes half closed, her voice drowned with love.

"Don't!" said the child, angry—"don't Miriam!"

"Yes; you love me, don't you?" she murmured deep in her throat, almost as if she were in a trance, and swaying also as if she were possessed by an ecstasy of love.

"Don't!" repeated the child, a frown on his clear brow.

"You love me, don't you?" she murmured.

"What do you make such a fuss for?" cried Paul, all in suffering because of her extreme emotion. "Why can't you be ordinary with him?"

She let the child go, and rose, and said nothing. Her intensity, which would leave no emotion on a normal plane, lulled the youth into a lethargy. And this fearful, naked contact of her on small occasions shocked him. He was used to his mother's reserve. And on such occasions he was thankful in his heart and soul that he had his mother, so sure and wholesome.

All the life of Miriam's body was in her eyes, which were usually dark as a dark church, but could flame with light like a candle-glass. Her face scarcely ever showed from its look of brooding. She might have been one of the women who went with Mary when Jesus was dead. Her body was not flexible and living. She walked with a swing, rather heavily, her head bowed forward, pondering. She was not clumsy, and yet none of her movements seemed quite the movements. Often, when wiping the dishes, she would stand in bewilderment and chagrin because she had pulled in her elbows a cup or a tumbler. It was so if, in her fear and self-mistrust, she

put too much strength into the effort. There was no looseness or shakiness about her. Everything was gripped stiff with intensity, and her effort, overcharged, closed in on itself.

She rarely varied from her swinging, forward, intense, walk. Occasionally she ran with Paul down the fields. Then her eyes blazed naked in a kind of ecstasy that frightened him. But she was physically afraid. If she were going over a stile, she gripped his hands in a little hard anguish, and began to lose her presence of mind. And he could not persuade her to jump from even a small height. Her eyes dilated, became exposed and palpitating.

"Not!" she cried, half-laughing in terror—"no!"

"You shall!" he said once, and, jerking her forward, he brought her falling from the fence. But her wild "Ah!" of pain, as if she were being crucified, was his. She landed on her feet safely, and afterwards had courage in this respect.

She was very much dissatisfied with her lot.

"Don't you like being at home?" Paul asked her, surprised.

"What would?" she answered, low and intense. "What is it? I'm all day cleaning what the boys make just as bad as five minutes. I don't want to be at home."

"What do you want, then?"

"I want to do something. I want a chance like anybody else. Why should I, because I'm a girl, be kept at home and not allowed to be anything? What chance have I?"

"Chance of what?"

"Of knowing anything—of learning, of doing anything. It's not fair, because I'm a woman."

She seemed very bitter. Paul wondered. In his own home Annie was almost glad to be a girl. She had not so much responsibility; things were lighter for her. She never wanted to be other than a girl. But before, almost fiercely, wished she were a man. And yet the hard men at the same time.

"But it's as well to be a woman as a man," he said, frowning.

"Ha! Is it? Men have everything."

"I should think women ought to be as glad to be women as men are to be men," he answered.

"Not!" she shook her head—"no! Everything the men have."

"But what do you want?" he asked.

"I want to learn. Why should it be that I know nothing?"

"What! such as mathematics and French?"

"Why shouldn't I know mathematics? Yes!" she cried, her eye expanding in a kind of defiance.

"Well, you can learn as much as I know," he said. "I'll teach you, if you like."

Her eyes dilated. She mistrusted him as a teacher.

"Would you?" he asked.

Her head had dropped, and she was working her finger busily.

"Yes," she said hesitatingly.

He used to tell his mother all these things.

"I'm going to teach Missus algebra," he said.

"Well," replied Mrs. Morel, "I hope she'll get her on it."

When he went up to the farm on the Monday evening, it was drawing twilight. Missus was just sweeping up the kitchen, and was kneeling at the hearth when he entered. Everyone was out but her. She looked round at him, flushed, her dark eyes shining, her long hair falling about her face.

"Hello!" she said, soft and casual. "I knew it was you."

"How?"

"I knew your step. Nobody trends so quick and firm."

He sat down, sighing.

"Ready to do some algebra?" he asked, drawing a little book from his pocket.

"Yes——"

He could feel her backing away.

"You said you wanted," he insisted.

"Tonight, though?" she faltered.

"But I came on purpose. And if you want to learn it, you must begin."

She took up her sash in the chaisson and looked at him, half tremendously, laughing.

"Yes, but to-night! You see, I haven't thought of it."

"Well, my gentleman! Take the sash and come."

He went and sat on the stone bench in the back-yard, where the big milk-cans were standing, tipped up, to sleep. The men were in the cowsheds. He could hear the birds sing-long of the milk spouting into the pails. Presently she came, bringing some big greenish apples.

"You know you like them," she said.

He took a bite.

"Sit down," he said, with his mouth full.

She was the righted, and pressed over his shoulder. It irritated him. He gave her the book quickly.

"Here," he said. "It's only letters for figures. You put down 'a' instead of 'o' or 'e'."

They worked, he talking, she with her head down on the book. He was quick and busy. She never answered. Occasionally, when he demanded of her, "Do you see?" she looked up at him,

her eyes wide with the half-laugh that comes of fear. "Don't you?" he cried.

He had been too fast. But she said nothing. He questioned her more, then got hot. It made his blood come to see her there, as it were, at his mercy, her mouth open, her eyes dilated with laughter that was afraid, apologetic, ashamed. Then Edgar came along with two buckets of milk.

"Hello!" he said. "What are you doing?"

"Algiers," replied Paul.

"Algiers!" repeated Edgar curiously. Then he passed on with a laugh. Paul took a bite at his forgotten apple, looked at the miserable cabbages in the garden, pecked into them by the fire, and he wanted to pull them up. Then he glanced at Miriam. She was poring over the book, seemed absorbed in it, yet trembling lest she could not get at it. It made him cross. She was ruddy and beautiful. Yet her soul seemed to be intensely suppliant. The algiers-book she closed, drinking, knowing he was angry; and at the same instant he grew gentle, seeing her hurt because she did not understand.

But things came slowly to him. And when she held herself in a grip, seemed so utterly humble before the leaves, it made his blood rove. He stared at her, got ashamed, crossed the leaves, and grew ferocious again, abusing her. She listened in silence. Occasionally, very rarely, she defended herself. Her liquid dark eyes blazed at him.

"You don't give me time to learn it," she said.

"All right," he answered, throwing the book on the table and lighting a cigarette. Then, after awhile, he went back to her repentant. So the lessons went. He was always either in a rage or very gentle.

"What do you tremble your soul before it for?" he cried. "You don't learn algiers with your blessed soul. Can't you look at it with your clear simple wit?"

Often, when he went again into the kitchen, Mrs. Leister would look at him reproachfully, saying:

"Paul, don't be so hard on Miriam. She may not be quick, but I'm sure she tries."

"I can't help it," he said rather placidly. "I go off for it."

"You don't mind me, Miriam, do you?" he asked of the girl later.

"No," she reassured him in her beautiful deep tones—"no, I don't mind."

"Don't mind me; it's my fault."

But, in spite of himself, his blood began to boil with her. It was

strange than no one else made him in such fury. He flared against her. Once he threw the pencil in her face. There was a silence. She turned her face slightly aside.

"I didn't——" he began, but got no farther, feeling weak in all his bones. She never reproached him or was angry with him. He was often cruelly ashamed. But still again his anger burnt like a bubble uncharged; and still, when he saw her eager, alert, as it were, blind face, he felt he wanted to throw the pencil in it; and still, when he saw her hand trembling and her cheeks parted with suffering, his heart was scolded with pain for her. And because of the intensity to which she roused him, he sought her.

Then he often avoided her and went with Edgar. Miriam and her brother were naturally antagonistic. Edgar was a reformist, who was curious, and had a sort of scientific interest in life. It was a great business to Miriam to see herself detected by Paul for Edgar, who earned so much fewer. But the youth was very happy with her older brother. The two men spent afternoons together on the land or in the loft doing carpentry, when it rained. And they talked together, or Paul taught Edgar the songs he himself had learned from Annie at the piano. And often all the men, Mr. Livers as well, had bitter debates on the nationalizing of the land and similar problems. Paul had already lost his mother's view, and so these were as yet his own, he argued for her. Miriam attended and took part, but was all the time waiting until it should be over and a personal communication might begin.

"After all," she said within herself, "if the land were nationalized, Edgar and Paul and I would be just the same." So she waited for the youth to come back to her.

He was studying for his painting. He loved to sit at home, alone with his machine, at night, working and working. The crowd or road. Then, looking up from his task, he would rest his eyes for a moment on her face, that was bright with living warmth, and he returned gladly to his work.

"I can do my best things when you sit there in your rocking-chair, mother," he said.

"I'm sure!" she exclaimed, smiling with much skepticism. But she felt it was so, and her heart quivered with brightness. For many hours she sat still, slightly conscious of him labouring away, while she worked or read her book. And he, with all his soul's intensity directing his pencil, could feel her warmth inside like his strength. They were both very happy so, and both unconscious of it. These things, that meant so much, and which were real living, they almost ignored.

He was conscious only when stimulated. A sketch finished, he

always wanted to take it to Miriam. Then he was stimulated into knowledge of the work he had produced unconsciously. In contact with Miriam he gained insight; his vision went deeper. From his mother he drew the life-warmer, the strength to produce; Miriam urged this warmer into intensity like a white light.

When he returned to the factory the conditions of work were better. He had Wednesday afternoon off to go to the Art School—Miss Jordan's provision—returning in the evening. Then the factory closed at six instead of eight on Thursday and Friday evenings.

One evening in the summer Miriam and he went over the fields by Horaf's Farm on their way from the Liberty house. So it was only three miles to Willey Farm. There was a yellow glow over the mowing-grass, and the corn-broads burned crimson. Gradually, as they walked along the high land, the gold in the west sank down to red, the red to crimson, and the the dull blue crept up against the glow.

They came out upon the highway to Althorn, which ran white between the darkening fields. There Fred hesitated. It was two miles home for him, one mile forward for Miriam. They both looked up the road that ran in shadow right under the glow of the north-west sky. On the crest of the hill, Sally, with its stark houses and the up-pitched hand-roads of the pit, stood in black silhouette small against the sky.

He looked at his watch.

"Nine o'clock!" he said.

The pair stood, look to part, hugging their heads.

"The wood is so lovely now," she said. "I warned you about it."

He followed her slowly across the road to the white gate.

"They grumble so if I'm late," he said.

"But you're not doing anything wrong," she answered impatiently.

He followed her across the ribbled pasture in the dusk. There was a confusion in the wood, a mass of leaves, of honeysuckle, and a twilight. The two walked in silence. Night came wonderfully there, among the throng of dark tree-trunks. He looked round, expectant.

She wanted to show him a certain wild-rose bush she had discovered. She knew it was wonderful. And yet, till he had seen it, she felt it had not come into her soul. Only he could make it her own, immortal. She was dissatisfied.

There was already on the path. In the old oak-wood a mist was rising, and he hesitated, wondering whether one wilderness were a sword of fog or only dampen-dreams pallid in a cloud.

By the time they came to the pine-wood Miriam was getting very eager and very tense. Her bath might be gone. She might not be able to find it; and she wanted it so much. Almost passionately she wanted to be with him when he stood before the flowers. They were going to have a communion together—something that thrilled her, something holy. He was walking beside her in silence. They were very near to each other. She trembled, and he listened, vaguely anxious.

Coming to the edge of the wood, they saw the sky in front, like mother-of-pearl, and the earth growing dark. Somewhere on the eastern branches of the pine-wood the honey-suckle was screaming sweet.

"Where?" he asked.

"Down the middle path," she murmured, quivering.

When they turned the corner of the path she moved still. In the wide walk between the pines, giving neither brightness, she could distinguish nothing for some moments; the growing light robbed things of their colour. Then she saw her bath.

"Ah!" she cried, hastening forward.

It was very still. The tree was tall and ragged. It had thrown its leaves onto a hawthorn-bush, and its long streamers trailed thick, right down to the grass, splashing the darkness everywhere with great spilt stars, pure white. Its leaves of ivory and its large splashed veins the rosette gleamed on the darkness of foliage and stems and grass. Paul and Miriam stood close together, silent, and watched. Pale as silver pale the steady room shone out to them, seeming to breathe something in their souls. The dark came like smoke around, and still did not put out the room.

Paul looked into Miriam's eyes. She was pale and expectant with wonder, her lips were parted, and her dark eyes lay open to him. His look seemed to travel down into her. Her soul quivered. It was the communion she wanted. He turned aside, as if pained. He turned to the bath.

"They seem as if they walk like butterflies, and shake themselves," he said.

She looked at her room. They were white, some incurved and holy, others expanded in an ecstasy. The tree was dark as a shadow. She lifted her hand impulsively to the flowers; she went forward and touched them in worship.

"Let us go," he said.

There was a cool scent of ivory rose—a white, virgin scent. Something made him feel anxious and imprisoned. The two walked in silence.

"Till Sunday," he said quietly, and left her; and she walked

home slowly, feeling her soul satisfied with the hollow of the night. He scrambled down the path. And as soon as he was out of the wood, in the first open meadow, where he could breathe, he started to run as fast as he could. It was like a delicious delirium in his veins.

Always when he went with Miriam, and it grew rather late, he knew his mother was fretting and getting angry about him—why, he could not understand. As he went into the house, flinging down his bag, his mother looked up at the clock. She had been sitting thinking, because a child to her eyes prevented her reading. She could feel Paul being driven away by this girl. And she did not care for Miriam. "She is one of those who will want to suck a man's soul out till he has none of his own left," she said to herself; "and he is just such a gilly as to let himself be absorbed. She will never let him become a man; she never will." So, while he was away with Miriam, Mrs. Moor grew more and more worked up.

She glanced at the clock and said, mildly and rather sweetly:

"You have been far enough to-night."

His soul, warm and exposed from contact with the girl, shrank.

"You must have been right home with her," his mother continued.

He would not answer. Mrs. Moor, looking at him quickly, saw his hair was damp on his forehead with heat, saw him frowning in his heavy fashion, resentfully.

"She must be wonderfully fascinating, that you can't get away from her, but must go trawling eight miles at this time of night."

He was hurt between the past glamour with Miriam and the knowledge that his mother fretted. He had meant not to say anything, to refuse to answer. But he could not harden his heart to ignore his mother.

"I am like to talk to her," he answered irritably.

"Is there nobody else to talk to?"

"You wouldn't say anything if I went with Edgar."

"You know I should. You know, whoever you went with, I should say it was too far for you to go trawling, late at night, when you've been to Nottingham. Besides"—her voice suddenly flamed into anger and contempt—"it is disgusting—bits of lads and girls courting."

"It is no courting," he said.

"I don't know what else you call it."

"It's real. Do you think we guess and do? We only talk."

"The goodness knows what time and distance," was the serene rejoinder.

Paul wrapped at the lace of his boots angrily.

"What are you so mad about?" he asked. "Because you don't like her?"

"I don't say I don't like her. But I don't hold with children keeping company, and never did."

"But you don't mind our Annie going out with Jim Inger?"

"They've more sense than you two."

"Why?"

"Our Annie's not one of the deep sort."

He failed to see the meaning of this remark. But his mother looked tired. She was never so strong after William's death; and her eyes hurt her.

"Well," he said, "it's so pretty in the country. Mr. Starch asked about you. He said he'd asked you. Are you a bit better?"

"I ought to have been in bed a long time ago," she replied.

"Why, mother, you know you wouldn't have gone before quarter-past ten."

"Oh yes, I should."

"Oh, little woman, you'd say anything now you're disagreeable with me, wouldn't you?"

He kissed her forehead that he knew so well: the deep marks between the brows, the ring of the first hair, greying now, and the proud setting of the temples. His hand lingered on her shoulder after his kiss. Then he went slowly to bed. He had forgotten Miriam; he only saw how his mother's hair was lifted back from her warm, broad brow. And somehow, she was hurt.

Then the next time he saw Miriam he said to her:

"Don't let me be late to-night—not later than ten o'clock. My mother gets so upset."

Miriam dropped her head, brooding.

"Why does she get upset?" she asked.

"Because she says I oughtn't to be out late when I have to get up early."

"Very well!" said Miriam, rather quietly, with just a touch of a sneer.

He returned that. And he was usually late again.

That there was any love growing between him and Miriam neither of them would have acknowledged. He thought he was too near the rock of insensibility, and she thought herself too lofty. They both were late in coming to maturity, and physical ripeness was much behind even the physical. Miriam was exceedingly sensitive, as her mother had always been. The slightest greenness made her mood almost in anguish. Her breaths were brutal, but never coarse in speech. The rain did all the shaming of her.

garden outside. But, perhaps, because of the continual business of birds and of beguiling which goes on upon every farm, Miriam was the more hypersensitive to the matter, and her blood was clattered almost to disport of the faintest suggestion of such incursions. Paul took his place from her, and their intimacy went on in an strictly blanched and chaste fashion. It could never be maintained that the mare was in heat.

When he was nineteen, he was earning only twenty shillings a week, but he was happy. His painting went well, and life went well enough. On the Good Friday he organised a walk to the Hamble Stone. There were three lads of his own age, then Annie and Arthur, Miriam and Geoffrey. Arthur, apprenticed as an electrician in Northampton, was home for the holiday. Moral, as usual, was up early, whistling and mowing in the yard. At seven o'clock the family heard him buy threepennyworth of bananas home; he talked with gusto to the little girl who brought them, calling her "my darling." He turned away several boys who came with more bananas, telling them they had been "hoaxed" by a little lass. Then Mrs. Moral got up, and the family struggled down. It was an immense luxury to everybody, this being in bed just beyond the ordinary time on a weekday. And Paul and Arthur read before breakfast, and had the meat unwashed, sitting in their shirt-sleeves. This was another holiday luxury. The room was warm. Everything felt free of care and anxiety. There was a sense of plenty in the house.

While the boys were reading, Mrs. Moral went into the garden. They were now in another house, an old one, near the Scapill Street house, which had been left soon after William had died. Directly came an excited cry from the garden:

"Paul, Paul! come and look!"

It was his mother's voice. He threw down his book and went out. There was a long garden that ran to a field. It was a gray, cold day, with a sharp wind blowing out of Dorsetshire. Two high away Blomwood began, with a jumble of rock and red house-roofs, out of which rose the church tower and the spire of the Congregational Chapel. And beyond were woods and hills, right away to the pale gray heights of the Pennine Chain.

Paul looked down the garden for his mother. Her head appeared among the young currant-bushes.

"Come here!" she cried.

"What for?" he answered.

"Come and see."

She had been looking at the birds on the currant-trees. Paul stood up,

"To think," she said, "that here I might never have seen them!"

Her son went to her side. Under the fence, in a little bed, was a row of pale greyish leaves, such as come from very immature bulbs, and three cypresses in bloom. Mrs. Maest pointed to the deep blue flowers.

"Now, just see these!" she exclaimed. "I was looking at the currant-bushes, when, think I to myself, 'There's something very blue; is it a bit of sugar-bag?' and there behold you! Sugar-bag! Three gloves of the same, and such beauties! But where on earth did they come from?"

"I don't know," said Paul.

"Well, that's a marvel, now! I thought I knew every weed and blade in this garden. But haven't they done well? You see, that gooseberry-bush just shivers from. Not ripped, not touched!"

He crouched down and turned up the bells of the little blue flowers.

"They're a glorious colour!" he said.

"Aren't they?" she cried. "I guess they come from Scotland, where they say they have such lovely things. Fancy them against the snow! But where have they come from? They can't have flown here, can they?"

Then he remembered having at home a lot of little seeds of bulbs to plant.

"And you never told me," she said.

"No; I thought I'd leave it till they might bloom."

"And now, you see! I might have missed them. And I've never had a glory of the snow in my garden in my life."

She was full of excitement and elation. The garden was no smaller joy to her. Paul was thankful for her tale at last to be in a house with a long garden that went down to a field. Every morning after breakfast she went out and was happy pottering about in it. And it was true, she knew every weed and blade.

Everybody turned up for the walk. Fred was packed, and they set off a merry, delighted party. They hung over the wall of the mill-race, dropped paper in the water on one side the tunnel and watched it shoot out on the other. They stood on the foot-bridge over Sandhurst Station and looked at the crowds glancing coldly.

"You should see the Flying Scotsman come through at halfpast six!" said Leonard, whose father was a signaller. "Look, but she doesn't half beat!" and the little party looked up the line one way, to London, and the other way, to Scotland, and they felt the touch of those two magical places.

In Ilkerton the colliers were waiting in gangs for the public-house to open. It was a town of idleness and lounging. At Stanton Gate the iron foundry blazed. Over everything there were great discolorations. At Thoresby they crossed again from Derbyshire into Nottinghamshire. They came to the Hockley Street at dinner-time. The field was crowded with folk from Nottingham and Ilkerton.

They had expected a venerable and dignified monument. They found a little, grained, twisted stump of rock, something like a decayed mushroom, standing out pathetically on the side of a field. Leonard and Dick immediately proceeded to carve their initials, "L. W." and "R. P." in the old red sandstone; but Paul desisted, because he had read in the newspaper satirical remarks about initials-carvers, who would find no other road to immortality. Then all the lads clustered in the top of the rock to look round.

Everywhere in the field below, factory girls and lads were eating lunch or sporting about. Beyond was the garden of an old mansion. It had yew-hedges and ditch channels and borders of yellow crocuses round the lawn.

"See," said Paul to Misses, "what a quiet garden!"

She saw the dark eyes and the golden eyebrows, then she looked at him gratefully. He had not seemed to belong to her among all these others; he was different then—not her Paul, who understood the slightest quiver of her instrument and, but something else, speaking another language than her. Now it hurt her, and saddened her very perceptions. Only when he came right back to her, leaving his voice, his lower self, as she thought, would she feel alive again. And now he asked her to look at this garden, wanting the contact with her again. Disparting of the set in the field, she hurried to the quiet lawn, surrounded by dozens of shut-up crocuses. A feeling of stillness, almost of ecstasy, came over her. It felt almost as if she were alone with him in this garden.

Then he left her again and joined the others. Soon they started home, Misses behind, alone. She did not fit in with the others: she could very rarely get into human relations with anyone as her friend, her companion, her lover, was Nature. She was like the sun desiring vanity. In the dusty, cold hedgerows were some red leaves. She fingered to gather them, tenderly, passionately. The love in her finger-tips warmed the leaves; the passion in her heart came to a glow upon the leaves.

Suddenly she realised she was alone in a strange road, and she hurried forward. Turning a corner in the lane, she came upon Paul, who stood here over something, his mind fixed on it, working

away steadily, patiently, a little hopefully. She hesitated in her approach, to watch.

He remained concentrated in the middle of the aged. Beyond, one rift of rich gold in that colourless grey evening seemed to make him stand out in dark relief. She saw him, slender and firm, as if the setting sun had given him to her. A deep pain took hold of her, and she knew she must love him. And she had discovered him, discovered in him a new potentiality, discovered his loneliness. Quivering as at some "annunciation," she went slowly forward.

At last he looked up.

"Why," he exclaimed gratefully, "have you waited for me?"

She saw a deep shadow in his eyes.

"What is it?" she asked.

"The spring broken here,"; and he showed her where his umbrella was injured.

Instantly, with some shame, she knew he had not done the damage himself, but that Geoffrey was responsible.

"It is only an old umbrella, isn't it?" she asked.

She wondered why he, who did not usually trouble over trifles, made such a mountain of this makeshift.

"But it was William's, and my mother can't help but know," he said quietly, still persistently working at the umbrella.

The words went through Miriam like a blade. This, then, was the confirmation of her vision of him! She looked at him. But there was about him a certain reserve, and she dared not confront him, not even speak softly to him.

"Come on," he said. "I can't do it"; and they went in silence along the road.

That same evening they were walking along under the trees by Mother Green. He was talking to her freely, seemed to be struggling to convince himself.

"You know," he said, with an effort, "if one person loves, the other does."

"Ah!" she answered. "Like mother said to me when I was little, 'Love begets love'."

"Yes, something like that, I think it must be."

"I hope so, because, if it were not, love might be a very terrible thing," she said.

"Yes, but it is—at least with most people," he answered.

And Miriam, thinking he had assured himself, felt strong in herself. She always regarded that sudden coming upon him in the lane as a conclusion. And this conversation remained green in her mind as one of the lessons of the lane.

Now she stood with him and for him. When, about this time, he envisaged the family looking at Willey Farm by some overhanging branch, she stuck to him, and believed he was right. And at this time she dreamed dreams of him, vivid, unforgettable. These dreams came again later on, developed to a more subtle psychological stage.

On the Easter Monday the next party took an excursion to Wingfield Manor. It was great excitement to Miriam to reach a train at Sunday Bridge, amid all the bands of the Bath Holiday crowd. They left the train at Alfriston. Paul was interested in the street and in the miller with their dogs. Here was a new race of miners. Miriam did not live till they came to the church. They were all rather timid of entering, with their bags of food, for fear of being turned out. Leonard, a cousin, this fellow, went first; Paul, who would have died rather than be sent back, went last. The place was decorated for Easter. In the East windows of white stained seemed to be growing. The air was dim and coloured from the windows, and shivered with a subtle scent of lilacs and marjoram. In that atmosphere Miriam's soul came into a glow. Paul was afraid of the things he wasn't to do; and he was sensitive to the feel of the place. Miriam turned to him. He answered. They were together. He would not go beyond the Communion-table. She loved him for that. Her soul expanded into prayer beside him. He felt the strange fluctuation of shadowy religious places. All his latent mysticism coloured into life. She was drawn to him. He was a prayer along with her.

Miriam very easily talked to the other lads. They at once became reticent in conversation with her. So usually she was silent.

It was past midday when they climbed the steep path to the manor. All things those early in the sun, which was wonderfully warm and welcoming. Cobbling and slabs were out. Everybody was tip-top full with happiness. The glaze of the boy, the soft, atmospheric grey of the castle walls, the gentleness of everything near the ruin, was perfect.

The manor is of hard, pale grey stone, and the outer walls are black and cold. The young folk were in rapture. They went to inspection, almost afraid that the delight of exploring this ruin might be denied them. In the first courtyard, within the high broken walls, were fern-cuts, with their shafts lying like on the ground, the eyes of the wheels brilliant with gold-coloured rust. It was very still.

All eagerly paid their dues, and went quickly through the fine clean arch of the inner courtyard. They were slip. Blast on

the pavement, where the hall had been, an old chest-tree was budding. All kinds of strange openings and broken rooms were in the shadow around them.

After lunch they set off once more to explore the ruins. This time the girl went with the boys, who could act as guides and explorers. There was one tall tower in a corner, rather towering, where they say Mary Queen of Scots was imprisoned.

"Think of the Queen going up here!" said Miriam in a low voice, as she climbed the hollow stairs.

"If she could get up," said Paul, "for she had rheumatism like anything. I reckon they treated her awfully."

"You don't think she deserved it?" asked Miriam.

"No, I don't. She was only lively."

They continued to mount the winding staircase. A high wind, blowing through the loopholes, went making up the shaft, and filled the girl's skirts like a balloon, so that she was ashamed, until he took the hem of her dress and held it down for her. He did it perfectly simply, as he would have picked up her glove. She remembered this always.

Round the broken top of the tower the ivy bushes out, old and handsome. Also, there were a few chill gillifers, in pale acid leaf. Miriam wanted to lean over for some fry, but he would not let her. Instead, she had to wait behind him, and take from him each quire as he gathered it and held it to her, each one separately, in the patient manner of chivalry. The tower seemed to rock in the wind. They looked over miles and miles of wooded country, and country with gleams of pasture.

The crypt underneath the mausoleum was beautiful, and in perfect preservation. Paul made a drawing: Miriam stayed with him. She was thinking of Mary Queen of Scots looking with her strained, hopeless eyes, that could not understand misery, over the hills whence no help came, or sitting in this crypt, being told of a God as cold as the place she sat in.

They set off again gaily, looking round on their beloved mausoleum that stood so alone and big on its hill.

"Supposing you could have the farm," said Paul to Miriam.

"Yes?"

"Wouldn't it be lovely to come and see you?"

They were now in the bare country of stone walls, which he loved, and which, though only ten miles from home, seemed so foreign to Miriam. The party was struggling. As they were crossing a large meadow that sloped away from the sea, along a path embedded with innumerable tiny glittering points, Paul, walking alongside, held his fingers in the rings of the lag

Miriam was carrying, and instantly she felt Anne behind, watchful and jealous. But the raindrop was bathed in a glory of sunshine, and the path was jewelled, and it was seldom that he gave her any sign. She held her fingers very still among the strings of the bag, his fingers touching; and the place was golden as a vision.

At last they came into the straggling grey village of Crick, that lies high. Beyond the village was the famous Crick Summit that Paul could see from the garden at home. The party pushed on. Great expanses of country spread around and below. The lads were eager to get to the top of the hill. It was capped by a round knoll, half of which was by now cut away, and on the top of which stood, an ancient monument, sturdy and squat, for signalling in old days far down into the level lands of Nottinghamshire and Leicestershire.

It was blowing so hard, high up there in the exposed place, that the only way to be safe was to stand nailed by the wind to the wall of the tower. At their feet fell the precipice where the limestone was quarried away. Below was a jumble of hills and tiny villages—Mastock, Ankerburg, Stoney Middleton. The lads were eager to spy out the church of Beeston, far away among the rather crowded country on the left. They were disgusted that it seemed to stand on a plain. They saw the hills of Derbyshire fall into the monastery of the Midlands that swept away South.

Miriam was somewhat scared by the wind, but the lads enjoyed it. They went on, miles and miles, to Wharfedale. All the food was eaten, everybody was hungry, and there was very little money to get home with. But they managed to procure a loaf and a current-loaf, which they tucked into places with short-knives, and ate sitting on the wall near the bridge, watching the bright Darwent rushing by, and the boatsmen from Mastock pulling up at the inn.

Paul was now pale with weariness. He had been responsible for the party all day, and now he was done. Miriam understood, and kept close to him, and he left himself in her hands.

They had an hour to wait at Ankerburg Station. Trains came, crowded with excursionists returning to Manchester, Birmingham, and London.

"We might be going there—folk easily might think we're going that far," said Paul.

They got back rather late. Miriam, walking home with Geoffrey, watched the moon rise big and red and misty. She felt something was fulfilled in her.

She had an older sister, Agatha, who was a school-teacher. Between the two girls was a feud. Miriam considered Agatha worldly. And she wanted herself to be a school-mistress.

One Saturday afternoon Agatha and Miriam were upstairs dressing. Their bedroom was over the stable. It was a low room, not very large, and bare. Miriam had nailed on the wall a reproduction of Veronese's "St. Catherine." She loved the woman who sat in the window, dreaming. Her two windows were too small to sit in. But the front one was crisscrossed over with heavy-lattice and Virginia creeper, and looked upon the tree-tops of the oak-wood across the yard, while the back window, no bigger than a handkerchief, was a loophole to the east, to the dawn breaking up against the beloved round hills.

The two sisters did not talk much to each other. Agatha, who was fair and small and determined, had rebelled against the home atmosphere, against the doctrine of "the other cheek." She was out in the world now, in a fair way to be independent. And she lacked an worldly values, an appearance, an manner, or position, which Miriam would this have ignored.

Both girls liked to be upstairs, out of the way, when Paul came. They preferred to come running down, open the stable-door door, and see him washing, expectant of them. Miriam stood patiently pulling over her head a cap he had given her. It caught in the first comb of her hair. But at last she had it on, and the red-brown wooden bench looked well against her coal brown neck. She was a well-developed girl, and very handsome. But in the little looking-glass nailed against the whitewashed wall she could only see a fragment of herself at a time. Agatha had bought a little mirror of her own, which she propped up to suit herself. Miriam was not in the window. Suddenly she heard the well-known click of the chair, and she saw Paul fling open the gate, push his bicycle into the park. She saw him look at the house, and she thrust away. He walked in a nonchalant fashion, and his bicycle went with him as if it were a live thing.

"Paul's come!" she exclaimed.

"Are'n't you glad?" said Agatha curiously.

Miriam stood still in amazement and bewilderment.

"Well, aren't you?" she asked.

"Yes, but I'm not going to let him see it, and think I wanted him."

Miriam was startled. She heard him putting his bicycle in the stable underneath, and talking to Jimmy, who had been a job here, and who was steady.

"Well, Jimmy my dad, how are terf? Not too sick an' badly, he? Why, then, it's a shame, my own lad."

She heard the rope run through the hole as the horse lifted its head from the lad's caress. Now she loved to listen when he thought only she horse could hear. But there was a suspect in her

Eden. She searched earnestly in herself to see if she wanted Paul Morel. She felt there would be some disgrace in it. Full of mixed feeling, she was afraid she did want him. She stood self-questioned. Then came an agony of new shame. She struck within herself in a coil of misery. Did she want Paul Morel, and did he know she wanted him? What a terrible inquiry upon her! She felt as if her whole soul called into being of shame.

Agatha was dressed first, and ran downstairs. Miriam heard her greet the tall gaily, knew exactly how brilliant her grey eyes became with that vow. She herself would have felt it bold to have greeted him in such wise. Yet there she stood under the self-accusation of wanting him, tied to that stake of shame. In bitter perplexity she knelt down and prayed:

"O Lord, let me not love Paul Morel. Keep me from loving him, if I ought not to love him."

Something anomalous in the prayer assailed her. She lifted her head and pondered. How could it be wrong to love him? Love was God's gift. And yet it caused her shame. That was because of him, Paul Morel. But, there, it was not his affair, it was her own, between herself and God. She was to be a sacrifice. But it was God's sacrifice, not Paul Morel's or her own. After a few minutes she laid her face in the pillow again, and said:

"But, Lord, if it is Thy will that I should love him, make me love him—as Christ would, who died for the souls of men. Make me love him spiritually, because he is Thy son."

She remained kneeling for some time, quite still, and deeply moved, her black hair against the red squares and the lavender-spigged squares of the patchwork-quilt. Prayer was almost essential to her. Then she fell into that capture of self-sacrifice, identifying herself with a God who was sacrificed, which gives to so many human souls their deepest bliss.

When she went downstairs Paul was lying back in an armchair, holding forth with much volubility to Agatha, who was admiring a little painting he had brought to show her. Miriam glanced at the two, and avoided their levity. She went into the parlour to be alone.

It was useless before she was able to speak to Paul, and then her manner was so distant he thought he had offended her.

Miriam discontinued her practice of going each Thursday evening to the library in Burwood. After calling for Paul regularly during the whole spring, a number of trifling incidents and tiny insults from his family awakened her to their attitude towards her, and she decided to go no more. So she answered to Paul one evening she would not call at his house again for him on Thursday nights.

"Why?" he asked, very short.

"Nothing. Only I'd rather not."

"Very well."

"But," she faltered, "if you'd care to meet me, we could still go together."

"Meet you where?"

"Somewhere—where you like."

"I shan't meet you anywhere. I don't see why you shouldn't keep asking for me. But if you won't, I don't want to meet you."

So the Thursday evenings which had been so precious to her, and to him, were dropped. He worked instead. Miss Morel sighed with satisfaction at this arrangement.

He would not have it that they were lovers. The intimacy between them had been kept so abstract, such a matter of the soul, all thoughts and weary struggle into consciousness, that he saw it only as a platonic friendship. He steadily denied there was anything else between them. Miriam was silent, or else she very quietly agreed. He was a fool who did not know what was happening to himself. By such agreement they ignored the remarks and insinuations of their acquaintances.

"We aren't lovers, we are friends," he said to her. "We know it. Let them talk. What does it matter what they say?"

Sometimes, as they were walking together, she slipped her arm slowly into his. But he always recoiled it, and she knew it. It caused a violent conflict in him. With Miriam he was always on the high plane of abstraction, when his natural line of love was transmitted into the fine stream of thought. She would have it no. If he went jolly and, as she put it, flippant, she waited till he came back to her, till the change had taken place in him again, and he was writhing with his own soul, frowning, passionate in his desire for understanding. And in this position for understanding her soul lay close to his; she had him all to herself. But he must be made abstract first.

Then, if she put her arm in his, it seemed him almost torture. His consciousness seemed to split. The place where she was touching him ran hot with passion. He was one intervening body, and he became cruel to her because of it.

One evening in midsummer Miriam called at the house, warm from drinking. Paul was alone in the kitchen; his mother could be heard moving about upstairs.

"Come and look at the moon-gate," said he to the girl.

They went into the garden. The sky behind the tower and the church was orange-red; the flower-garden was flooded with a strange warm light that lifted every leaf into significance. Paul

LAD-AND-GIRL LOVE

passed along a fine row of sweet-peas, gathering a blossom here and there, all cream and pale blue. Miriam followed, brushing the fragrance. To her, flowers appealed with such strength she felt she must make them part of herself. When she bent and breathed a flower, it was as if she and the flower were loving each other. Paul hated her for it. There seemed a sort of exposure about the action, something too intimate.

When he had got a fair bunch, they returned to the house. He listened for a moment to his mother's quiet movement upstairs, then he said:

"Come here, and let me pin them in for you." He arranged them one or three at a time in the bosom of her dress, stepping back now and then to see the effect. "You know," he said, taking the pin out of his mouth, "a woman ought always to arrange her flowers before her glass."

Miriam laughed. She thought flowers ought to be pinned in one's dress without any care. That Paul should take pains to do her flowers for her was his whim.

He was rather offended at her laughter.

"Some women do—those who look decent," he said.

Miriam laughed again, but deliberately, to show him that not her up with women in a general way. From most men she would have ignored it. But from him it hurt her.

He had scarcely finished arranging the flowers when he heard his mother's footsteps on the stairs. Hastily he pushed in the last pin and turned away.

"Don't let mother know," he said.

Miriam picked up her books and stood in the doorway looking with delight at the beautiful sunset. She would tell her Paul no more, she said.

"Good-evening, Mrs. Morel," she said, in a deferential way. She sounded as if she felt she had no right to be there.

"Oh, is it you, Miriam?" replied Mrs. Morel cordly.

But Paul insisted on everybody's accepting his friendship with the girl, and Mrs. Morel was too wise to have any open rupture.

It was not till he was twenty years old that the family could ever afford to go away for a holiday. Mrs. Morel had never been away for a holiday, except to see her sister, since she had been married. Now as long Paul had saved enough money, and they were all going. There was to be a party: some of Anne's friends, one friend of Paul's, a young man in the same office where William had previously been, and Miriam.

It was great excitement waiting for rooms. Paul and his mother debated it sedulously between them. They wanted a furnished

cottages for two weeks. She thought one week would be enough, but he insisted on two.

At last they got an answer from Mikhlohorpe, a cottage such as they wished for thirty shillings a week. There was immense jubilation. Paul was wild with joy for his mother's sake. She would have a real holiday now. He and she sat at evening picturing what it would be like. Annie came in, and Leonard, and Alice and Kitty. There was wild rejoicing and anticipation. Paul told Miriam. She seemed to brood with joy over it. But the Mireffs' house rang with excitement.

They went to go on Saturday morning by the snow trails. Paul suggested that Miriam should sleep at his house, because it was so far for her to walk. She came down for supper. Everybody was so excited that even Miriam was awakened with warmth. But almost as soon as she entered the feeling in the family became clear and right. He had discovered a poem by Jean Ingelow which mentioned Mikhlohorpe, and so he must read it to Miriam. He would never have got so far in the direction of sentimentality as to read poetry to his own family. But now they consented to listen. Miriam sat on the sofa absorbed in him. She always seemed absorbed in him, and by him, when he was present. Mrs. Mireff sat jealously in her own chair. She was going to hear also. And yet Annie and the father attended, Mireff with his head cocked in one side, like somebody listening to a sermon and feeling suspicious of the text. Paul ducked his head over the book. He had got now all the audience he cared for. And Mrs. Mireff and quite almost contented with Miriam who should listen best and do his lesson. He was in very high feather.

"But," interrupted Mrs. Mireff, "what is the 'Riddle of Enderby' that the bells are supposed to ring?"

"It's an old ruse they used to play on the bells for a warning against water. I suppose the Riddle of Enderby was drowned in a flood," he replied. He had not the faintest knowledge what it really was, but he would never have made so low as to confess that to his wife. They listened and believed him. He believed himself.

"And the people know what that ruse meant?" said his mother.

"Yes—just like the Scotch when they heard 'The Flowers of the Forest'—and when they used to ring the bells backward for alarm."

"How?" said Annie. "A bell sounds the same whether it's rung backwards or forwards."

"But," he said, "if you start with the deep bell and ring up to the high one—*dee—dee—dee—dee—dee—dee—dee—dee!*"

He ran up the scale. Everybody thought it clever. He thought so too. Then, waiting a minute, he overhauled the poem.

"Herd!" said Mrs. Morel curiously when he finished. "But I wish everything that's written weren't so bad."

"I can't see what they want dreadful' rhymes for," said Morel.

There was a pause. Annie got up to clear the table.

Miriam rose to help her with the pans.

"Let me help to wash up," she said.

"Certainly not," said Annie. "You sit down again. There aren't many."

And Miriam, who could not be familiar and insolent, sat down again to look at the book with Paul.

He was master of the party: his father was no good. And great concern he suffered lest the tin box should be put out at Fanny instead of at Mabel's room. And he wasn't equal to getting a carriage. His bold little mother did that.

"Herd!" she cried in a man. "Herd!"

Paul and Annie got behind the seat, convulsed with suppressed laughter.

"How much will it be to drive to Brook Cottage?" said Mrs. Morel.

"Two shillings."

"Why, how far is it?"

"A good way."

"I don't believe it," she said.

But she struggled in. There were eight crowded in one old assidic carriage.

"You see," said Mrs. Morel, "it's only shroopen each, and if it were a motor-car——"

They drove along. Each cottage they came to, Mrs. Morel cried:

"Is it that? Now, this is it!"

Everybody sat bouncin. They drove past. There was a universal sigh.

"I'm thankful it wasn't that house," said Mrs. Morel. "I was frightened." They drove on and on.

At last they descended at a house that stood alone over the dyke by the highroad. There was wild excitement because they had to cross a little bridge to get into the front garden. But they loved the house that lay so solitary, with a sea-meadow on one side, and immense expanses of land parished in white barley, yellow oats, red wheat, and green root-crops, flat and stretching level to the sky.

Paul kept awoken. He and his mother ran the show. The total expenses—lodging, food, everything—was sixteen shillings a week

per person. He and Leonard went bathing in the morning. Marcel was wandering abroad quite early.

"You, Paul," his mother called from the bedroom, "eat a piece of bread-and-butter."

"All right," he answered.

And when he got back he saw his mother presiding in state at the breakfast table. The woman of the house was young. Her husband was blind, and she did laundry work. So Mrs. Morel always washed the pots in the kitchen and made the beds.

"But you said you'd have a real holiday," said Paul, "and now you work."

"Work!" she exclaimed. "What are you talking about!"

He loved to go with her across the fields to the village and the sea. She was afraid of the plank bridges, and he abused her for being a baby. On the whole he stuck to her as if he were his man.

Marius did not get much of him, except, perhaps, when all the others went to the "Comes." Comes were awfully stupid to Marius, so he thought they were to himself also, and he preached priggishly to Aurèle about the futility of listening to them. Yet he, too, knew all their songs, and sang them along the roads roisterously. And if he found himself listening, the stupidity pleased him very much. Yet to Aurèle he said:

"Such red there isn't a grain of intelligence in it. Nobody with more gumption than a grasshopper could go and sit and listen." And to Marius he said, with much scorn of Aurèle and the others: "I suppose they're at the 'Comes'?"

It was queer to see Marius singing coon songs. She had a straight chin that went in a perpendicular line from the lower lip to the nose. She always reminded Paul of some odd barbed-iron angel when she sang, even when it was:

"Come down love's lane
For a walk with me, talk with me."

Only when he sketched, or at evening when the others were at the "Comes," she had him to herself. He talked to her endlessly about his love of horizontals: how they, the great levels of sky and land in Lincolnshire, meant to him the eternity of the wild, just as the bowed Norman arches of the church, repeating themselves, meant the dogged tramping forward of the persistent human soul, on and on, nobody knows where; in contradiction to the perpendicular lines and to the Gothic arch, which, he said, keeps up at heaven and touches the ceiling and lay itself in the clouds. Himself, he said, was Norman, Marius was Gothic. She loved to consent even to that.

One evening he and the rest up the great sweeping shore of sand towards Thefflethorpe. The long breakers plunged and ran in a line of foam along the coast. It was a warm evening. There was not a figure but themselves on the far reaches of sand, no noise but the sound of the sea. Paul loved to see it clumping at the beach. He loved to feel himself between the rocks of it and the silence of the sandy shore. Miriam was with him. Everything grew very intense. It was quite dark when they turned again. The way home was through a gap in the sandhills, and then along a rutted grass road between two dykes. The country was black and still. From behind the sandhills came the whisper of the sea. Paul and Miriam walked in silence. Suddenly he started. The whole of his blood seemed to burn into flame, and he could scarcely breathe. An enormous strange man was staring at them from the rim of the sandhills. He stood still, looking at it.

"Aid!" cried Miriam, when she saw it.

He remained perfectly still, staring at the immense and roddy mass, the only thing in the far-reaching darkness of the level. His heart beat heavily, the muscles of his arms contracted.

"What is it?" murmured Miriam, waiting for him.

He turned and looked at her. She stood beside him, far over in shadow. Her face, covered with the darkness of her hair, was waiting him nearer. But she was breathing. She was slightly afraid—deeply moved and religious. That was her best state. He was impotent against it. His blood was concentrated like a flame in his chest. But he could not get across to her. There were flames in his blood. But somehow she ignored them. She was expecting some religious state in him. Still passing, she was half aware of his passion, and gazed at him, troubled.

"What is it?" she murmured again.

"It's the moon," he answered, frowning.

"Yes," she assented. "Isn't it wonderful?" She was curious about him. The crisis was past.

He did not know himself what was the matter. He was naturally so young, and their intimacy was so abstract, he did not know he wanted to crush her as to his breast to ease the ache there. He was afraid of her. The fact that he might want her as a man wants a woman had in him been suppressed into a shame. When she looked in her convulsed, cold features from the thought of such a thing, he had wrenched to the depths of his soul. And now this "purity" prevented even their first love-life. It was as if the cold scarcely stilled the shock of physical love, even a passionate kiss, and then he was too shrinking and sensitive to give it.

As they walked along the dark beachside he watched the

man and did not speak. She plucked beside him. He hated her, disinterested in some way to make him despise himself. Looking ahead—he saw the one light in the darkness, the window of their lamp-lit cottage.

He loved to think of his mother, and the other jolly people.

"Well, everybody else has been in long ago!" said his mother as they entered.

"What does that matter!" he cried irritably. "I can go a walk if I like, can't I?"

"And I should have thought you could get into supper with the rest," said Mrs. Morel.

"I shall please myself," he retorted. "It's not his. I shall do as I like."

"Very well," said his mother curiously, "then do as you like." And she took no further notice of him that evening. Whilst he pretended neither to notice nor to care about, but not reading. Miriam read also, obliterating herself. Mrs. Morel hated her for making her son like this. She watched Paul growing irritable, grumpy, and melancholic. For this she put the blame on Miriam. Anne and all her friends joined against the girl. Miriam had no friend of her own, only Paul. But she did not suffer as much, because she despised the triviality of those other people.

And Paul hated her because, somehow, she spilt his ease and awkwardness. And he writhed himself with a feeling of humiliation.

Swift is Late

Aureus finished his apprenticeship, and got a job on the electrical plant at Milner Pt. He earned very little, but had a good chance of getting on. But he was wild and restless. He did not drink nor gamble. Yet he somehow contrived to get into endless scrapes, always through some hot-headed thoughtlessness. Either he went rabbiting in the woods, like a poacher, or he stayed in Nottingham all night instead of coming home, or he miscalculated his dive into the canal at Beeston, and scored his chest into one mass of wounds on the raw stones and tiles at the bottom.

He had not been at his work many months when again he did not come home one night.

"Do you know where Arthur is?" asked Paul at breakfast.

"I do not," replied his mother.

"He is a fool," said Paul. "And if he *did* anything I shouldn't mind. But no, he simply can't come away from a game of whist, or else he must see a girl home from the dancing-drink—quite propitiously—and so can't get home. He's a fool."

"I don't know that it would make it any better if he did something to make us all ashamed," said Mrs. Moor.

"Well, I should expect him more," said Paul.

"I very much doubt it," said his mother coldly.

They went on with breakfast.

"Are you awfully fond of him?" Paul asked his mother.

"What do you ask that for?"

"Because they say a woman always likes the youngest best."

"She may do—but I don't. No, he worries me."

"And you'd actually rather he was good?"

"I'd rather he showed some of a man's common sense."

Paul was new and irritable. He also worried his mother very often. She saw the sunshine going out of him, and she worried it.

As they were finishing breakfast came the postman with a letter from Derby. Mrs. Moor screwed up her eyes to look at the address.

"Give it here, blind eye!" exclaimed her son, snatching it away from her.

She started, and almost bowed his turn.

"It's from your son, Arthur," he said.

"What was—?" said Mrs. Moor.

"My dearest Mother," Paul said, "I don't know what made me take a fool. I want you to come and fetch me back from here. I came with Jack Bryden yesterday, instead of going to work, and enlisted. He said he was sick of wearing the hat of a fool out, and, like the idiot you know I am, I cannot agree with him.

"I have taken the King's shilling, but perhaps if you came for me they would let me go back with you. I was a fool when I did it. I don't want to be in the army. My dear mother, I am nothing but a trouble to you. But if you get me out of this, I promise I will have more sense and consideration. . . ."

Mrs. Moor sat down in her rocking-chair.

"Well, son," she cried, "let him stop!"

"Yes," said Paul, "let him stop."

There was silence. The mother sat with her hands folded in her apron, her face set, thinking.

"If I'm not still," she cried suddenly. "Sick!"

"Now," said Paul, beginning to frown, "you're not going to worry your soul out about this, do you hear?"

"I suppose I'm to take it as a blessing," she flushed, turning on her son.

"You're not going to mount it up to a tragedy, as these," he returned.

"The fool!—the young fool!" she cried.

"He'll look well in uniform," said Paul irritably.

His mother turned on him like a fury.

"Oh, will he?" she cried. "Not in my eyes!"

"He should get in the cavalry regiment; he'll have the time of his life, and will look an awful swell."

"Swell? swell—a mighty swell indeed!—a common soldier!"

"Well," said Paul, "what am I but a common clerk?"

"A good deal, my boy!" cried his mother, stung.

"What?"

"At any rate, a man, and not a thing in a red coat."

"I shouldn't mind being in a red one—or dark blue, that would suit me better—if they didn't burn me about too much."

But his mother had ceased to listen.

"Just as he was getting on, as might have been getting on, at his job—a young man—here he goes and ruins himself for life. What good will he be, do you think, after this?"

"It may lick him into shape beautifully," said Paul.

"Lick him into shape!—lick what marrow there was out of his

house. A soldier-like common soldier—nothing but a body that makes movements when it hears a shout. It's a fine thing!"

"I can't understand why it opens you," said Paul.

"No, perhaps you can't. But I understand!" and she sat back in her chair, her chin in one hand, holding her elbow with the other, brimmed up with wrath and dignity.

"And shall you go to Derby?" asked Paul.

"Yes."

"It's no good."

"I'll see for myself."

"And why on earth don't you let him stop. It's just what he wants."

"Of course," cried the mother, "you know what he wants!"

She got ready and went by the first train to Derby, where she saw her son and the sergeant. It was, however, no good.

When Morel was having his dinner in the evening, she said suddenly:

"I've had to go to Derby to-day."

The miner turned up his eyes, showing the whites in his black cap.

"How ter, hen. What took thee there?"

"That Arthur!"

"Oh—er' what's agone now?"

"He's only ordered."

Morel put down his knife and leaned back in his chair.

"May," he said, "that he never 'all!"

"And is going down to Aldershot to-morrow."

"Well!" exclaimed the miner. "That's a wonder!" He considered it a moment, said "H'm!" and proceeded with his dinner. Suddenly his face contracted with wrath. "I hope he may never see foot o' my home agin," he said.

"The idea!" cried Mrs. Morel. "Saying such a thing!"

"I do," repeated Morel. "A fool as runs away for a soldier, let 'im look after 'isn; I a'll do no more for 'im."

"A first night you have done as it is," she said.

And Morel was almost ashamed to go to his public-house that evening.

"Well, did you go?" said Paul to his mother when he came home.

"I did."

"And could you see him?"

"Yes."

"And what did he say?"

"He blathered when I came away."

"H'm?"

"And so did I, so you needn't 'h'm'!"

Mrs. Morel frowned after her son. She knew he would not like the army. He did not. The discipline was intolerable to him.

"But the doctor," she said with some pride to Paul, "said he was perfectly proportioned—almost exactly; all his measurements were correct. He is good-looking, you know."

"He's awfully nice-looking. But he doesn't treat the girls like William, does he?"

"No; it's a different character. He's a good deal like his father, irresponsible."

To console his mother, Paul did not go much to Willey Farm as his time. And in the summer exhibition of student's work in the Crafts he had two studies, a landscape in water-colours and a still life in oil, both of which had first-prize awards. He was deeply excited.

"What do you think I've got for my pictures, mother?" he asked, coming home one evening. She saw by his eyes he was glad. Her face flushed.

"Now, how should I know, my boy?"

"A first prize for those glass jars—"

"H'm?"

"And a first prize for that sketch up at Willey Farm."

"Both first?"

"Yes."

"H'm?"

There was a rory, bright look about her, though she said nothing.

"It's nice," he said, " isn't it?"

"It is."

"Why don't you praise me up to the skies?"

She laughed.

"I should have the trouble of dragging you down again," she said.

But she was full of joy, nevertheless. William had brought her his sporting trophies. She kept them still, and she did not forgive his death. Arthur was handsome—as least, a good specimen—and warm and generous, and probably would do well in the end. But Paul was going to distinguish himself. She had a great belief in him, the more because he was conscious of his own powers. There was so much to come out of him. Life for her was rich with promise. She was to see herself fulfilled. Not for nothing had been her struggle.

Several times during the exhibition Mrs. Morel went to the

Castle unknown to Paul. She wandered down the long rows looking at the other exhibits. Yes, they were good. But they had not in them a certain something which she demanded for her satisfaction. Some made her jealous, they were so good. She looked at them a long time trying to find fault with them. Then suddenly she had a shock that made her heart beat. There hung Paul's picture! She knew it as if it were painted on her heart.

"Name—Paul Morris—First Prize."

It looked so strange, there in public, on the walls of the Castle gallery, where in her lifetime she had seen so many pictures. And she glanced round to see if anyone had noticed her again in front of the same sketch.

But she felt a proud woman. When she met well-dressed ladies going home to the Park, she thought to herself:

"Yes, you look very well—but I wonder if your son had two first prizes in the Castle."

And she walked on, as proud a little woman as any in Fleetingham. And Paul felt he had done something for her, if only a little. All his work was here.

One day, as he was going up Castle Gate, he met Miriam. He had seen her on the Sunday, and had not expected to meet her in town. She was walking with a rather striking woman, blonde, with a sad expression, and a defiant carriage. It was strange how Miriam, in her broad, meditative bearing, looked dwarfed beside this woman with the handsome shoulders. Miriam watched Paul anxiously. His gaze was on the stranger, who ignored him. The girl saw his masculine spirit rear its head.

"Hello!" he said, "you didn't tell me you were coming to town."

"No," replied Miriam, half apologetically. "I drove in to Castle Market with father."

He looked at her companion.

"I've told you about Mrs. Dawes," said Miriam hastily; she was nervous. "Clara, do you know Paul?"

"I think I've seen him before," replied Mrs. Dawes indifferently, as she shook hands with him. She had scornful grey eyes, a skin like white honey, and a full mouth, with a slightly lifted upper lip that did not know whether it was raised in scorn of all men or out of eagerness to be kissed, but which believed the former. She carried her head back, as if she had drawn away in contempt, perhaps from men's lips. She wore a large, dowdy hat of black beaver, and a sort of slightly affected simple dress that made her look rather sick-like. She was evidently poor, and had not much taste. Miriam usually looked also.

"Where have you seen me?" Paul asked of the women.

She looked at him as if she would not trouble to answer. Then:

"Waiting with Louise Travers," she said.

Louise was one of the "spinal" girls.

"Why, do you know her?" he asked.

She did not answer. He turned to Miriam.

"Where are you going?" he asked.

"To the Clinic."

"What train are you going home by?"

"I am driving with father. I wish you could come too. What time are you free?"

"You know not all right to-night, damn it!"

And directly the two women moved on.

Paul remembered that Clara Dawson was the daughter of an old friend of Mrs. Levers. Miriam had sought her out because she had once been spinal overman at Jordan's, and because her husband, Baxter Dawson, was smith for the factory, making the tools for cripple instruments, and so on. Through her Miriam felt she got into direct contact with Jordan's, and could estimate better Paul's position. But Mrs. Dawson was separated from her husband, and had taken up Women's Rights. She was supposed to be clever. It interested Paul.

Baxter Dawson he knew and disliked. The smith was a man of thirty-one or thirty-two. He came occasionally through Paul's cartons—a big, wiry, man, also striving to look so, and handsome. There was a peculiar stiffness between himself and his wife. He had the same white skin, with a clear, golden tinge. His hair was of soft brown, his mustache was golden. And he had a similar stiffness in his bearing and manner. But then came the difference. His eyes, dark brown and quick-shifting, were diaphanous. They penetrated very slightly, and his eyelids hung over them in a way that was half-hate. His mouth too, was sensual. His whole manner was of cooled defiance, as if he were ready to knock anybody down who disapproved of him—perhaps because he really disapproved of himself.

From the first day he had hated Paul. Finding the latter impersonal, defenceless gaze of an artist on his face, he got into a fury.

"What are you looking at?" he asked, bullying.

The boy glanced away. But the smith used to stand behind the counter and talk to Mr. Papplesworth. His speech was dirty, with a kind of sensuousness. Again he fixed the youth with his cool, critical gaze fixed on his face. The smith started round as if he had been stung.

"What's yer lookin' at, three hap'orth o' pap?" he sneered.

The boy shrugged his shoulders slightly.

"Why yer——!" started Dawen.

"Looze him alone," said Mr. Pappleworth, in that instructing voice which means, "he's only one of your good little neps who can't help it."

Since that time the boy used to look at the neps every time he came through with the same curious criticism, glancing away before he met the neps's eyes. It made Dawen furious. They hated each other in silence.

Clara Dawen had no children. When she had left her husband the house had been broken up, and she had gone to live with her mother. Dawen lodged with his sister. In the same house was a sister-in-law, and somehow Paul knew that this girl, Louie Trevan, was now Dawen's woman. She was a handsome, headstrong beauty, who looked at the youth, and yet flushed if he walked along to the station with her as she went home.

The next time he went to see Miriam it was Saturday evening. She had a fire in the parlour, and was waiting for him. The others, except her father and mother and the young children, had gone out, so the two had the parlour together. It was a long, low, warm room. There were three of Paul's small sketches on the wall, and his photo was on the mantelpiece. On the table and on the high old rosewood piano were books of coloured leaves. He sat in the armchair, she crouched on the hearthrug near his feet. The glow was warm on her handsome, passive face as she knitted dress like a devotee.

"What did you think of Mrs. Dawen?" she asked quietly.

"She doesn't look very amiable," he replied.

"No, but don't you think she's a fine woman?" she said, in a deep tone.

"Yes—in stature. But without a grain of taste. I like her for some things. Is she disagreeable?"

"I don't think so. I think she's absorbed."

"What with?"

"Well—how would you like to be tied for life to a man like that?"

"Why did she marry him, then, if she was to have revolutions so soon?"

"Ay, why did she?" repeated Miriam bitterly.

"And I should have thought she had enough fight in her to match him," he said.

Miriam bowed her head.

"Ay?" she queried suddenly. "What makes you think so?"

"Look at her mouth—made for passion—and the very set-back of her throat——" He threw his head back in Clara's defiant manner.

Miriam bowed a little lower.

"Yes," she said.

There was a silence for some moments, while he thought of Clara.

"And what were the things you liked about her?" she asked.

"I don't know—her skin and the texture of her—*and* her—I don't know—there's a sort of *desire* somewhere in her. I appreciate her as an artist, that's all."

"Yes."

He wondered why Miriam crunched those hooding in that strange way. It irritated him.

"You don't really like her, do you?" he asked the girl.

She looked at him with her great, startled dark eyes.

"I do," she said.

"You don't—you can't—not really."

"Then what?" she asked slowly.

"Oh, I don't know—perhaps you like her because she's got a grudge against me."

That was probably one of his own reasons for liking Mrs. Dwyer, but this did not occur to him. They were silent. There had come into his forehead a knitting of the brows which was becoming habitual with him, particularly when he was with Miriam. She longed to smooth it away, and she was afraid of it. It seemed the stamp of a man who was not her man in Paul's blood.

There were some crimson berries among the leaves in the bowl. He reached over and pulled out a bunch.

"If you put red berries in your hair," he said, "who would you look like some witch or priestess, and never like a mother?"

She laughed with a naked, painful sound.

"I don't know," she said.

His vigorous warm hands were playing mockingly with the berries.

"Why can't you laugh?" he said. "You never laugh laughter. You only laugh when something is odd or incongruous, and then it almost seems to hurt you."

She bowed her head as if he were scolding her.

"I wish you could laugh at me just for one minute—just for one minute. I feel as if it would do something for."

"But"—and she looked up at him with eyes frightened and struggling—"I do laugh at you—I do."

"Never! There's always a kind of *earnesty*. When you laugh

I could always cry; it seems as if it shows up your suffering. Oh, you make me feel the heaves of my very soul and sighs." "Slowly she shook her head despairingly.

"I'm sure I don't want to," she said.

"I'm so damned spiritual with you always!" he cried.

She remained silent, thinking. "Then why don't you be otherwise?" But he saw her crouching, brooding figure, and it seemed to tear him in two.

"But, there, it's autumn," he said, "and everybody feels like a disenchanted spirit then."

There was still another silence. This peculiar sadness between them thrilled her soul. He seemed so beautiful with his eyes gone dark, and looking as if they were deep as the deepest well.

"You make me so spiritual!" he laughed. "And I don't want to be spiritual."

She took her finger from her mouth with a little pop, and looked up at him almost challenging. But still her soul was raised in her great dark eyes, and there was the same yearning appeal upon her. If he could have kissed her in abstract poetry he would have done so. But he could not kiss her thus—and she seemed to have no other way. And she yearned to him.

He gave a brief laugh.

"Well," he said, "get that French and we'll do some—some Verhaïen."

"Yes," she said in a deep tone, almost of resignation. And she rose and got the books. And her rather red, nervous hands looked so pitiful, he was made to comfort her and kiss her. But then he dared no more could not. There was something prevented him. His kisses were wrong for her. They continued the reading till ten o'clock, when they went into the kitchen, and Paul was natural and jolly again with the father and mother. His eyes were dark and shining; there was a kind of fascination about him.

When he went into the barn for his bicycle he found the front wheel punctured.

"Fetch me a drop of water in a bowl," he said to her. "I shall be late, and then I'll catch it."

He lighted the hurricane lamp, took off his coat, turned up the bicycle, and set speedily to work. Miriam came with the bowl of water and stood close to him, watching. She loved to see his hands doing things. He was slim and vigorous, with a kind of sadness even in his most busy movements. And busy at his work he seemed to forget her. She loved him absorbedly. She wanted to run her hands down his sides. She always wanted to embrace him, so long as he did not want her.

"There!" he said, rising suddenly. "Now, could you have done it quicker?"

"No!" she laughed.

He straightened himself. His back was towards her. She put her two hands on his sides, and ran them quickly down.

"You are so fast!" she said.

He laughed, hating her voice, but his blood roared to a worse of flame by her hands. She did not seem to realize him in all this. He might have been an object. She never realized the male he was.

He lighted his bicycle-lamp, bounced the machine on the bare floor to see that the tyres were sound, and buttoned his coat.

"That's all right!" he said.

She was trying the brakes, that she knew were broken.

"Did you have them mended?" she asked.

"No!"

"But why didn't you?"

"The back one gave on a bit."

"But it's not safe."

"I can use my toe."

"I wish you'd had them mended," she murmured.

"Don't worry—come to tea to-morrow, with Edgar."

"Shall we?"

"Oh—about four. I'll come to meet you."

"Very well."

She was pleased. They went across the dark yard to the gate. Looking across, he saw through the uncurtained window of the kitchen the backs of his, and Mrs. Lovers in the warm glow. It looked so cozy. The road, with pine-trees, was quite black in front.

"Till to-morrow," he said, jumping on his bicycle.

"You'll take care, won't you?" she pleaded.

"Yes."

His voice already came out of the darkness. She stood a moment watching the light from his lamp race less obscurely along the ground. She turned very slowly indoors. Orion was whirling up over the wood, his dog twinkling after him, half smothered. For the rest the world was full of darkness, and silence, save for the breathing of cattle in their stalls. She prayed earnestly for his safety that night. When he left her, she often lay in anxiety, wondering if he had got home safely.

He dropped down the hills on his bicycle. The roads were gray, so he had to let it go. He felt a pleasure as the machine plunged over the second, steeper drop in the hill. "How good!" he said. It was risky, because of the curves in the darkness at the

bottom, and because of the horses' waggon with drunken suggestions asleep. His bicycle seemed to fall towards him, and he loved it. Rockdown was almost a man's revenge on his women. He feels he is not valued, so he will risk destroying himself to deprive her altogether.

The ones on the lake seemed to leap like grasshoppers, alive upon the blackness, as he spun past. Then there was the long climb home.

"See, mother!" he said, as he threw her the berries and leaves on to the table.

"H'm!" she said, glancing at them, then away again. She sat reading, alone, as she always did.

"Aren't they pretty?"

"Yes."

He knew she was cross with him. After a few minutes he said:

"Edgar and Miriam are coming to tea to-morrow."

She did not answer.

"You don't mind?"

Still she did not answer.

"Do you?" he asked.

"You know whether I mind or not."

"I don't see why you should. I have plenty of meals there."

"You do."

"Then why do you begrudge them tea?"

"I begrudge whom tea?"

"What are you so hostile for?"

"Oh, say no more! You've asked her to tea, it's quite sufficient. She'll come."

He was very angry with his mother. He knew it was mainly Miriam she objected to. He flung off his boots and went to bed.

Paul went to meet his friends the next afternoon. He was glad to see them coming. They arrived home at about four o'clock. Everywhere was dark and still for Sunday afternoon. Mrs. Mabel sat in her black dress and black apron. She rose to meet the visitors. With Edgar she was cordial, but with Miriam cold and rather grudging. Yet Paul thought the girl looked so nice in her brown cashmere frock.

He helped his mother to get tea ready. Miriam would have gladly professed, but was afraid. He was rather proud of his home. There was about it now, he thought, a certain distinction. The chairs were only wooden, and the sofa was old. But the hearthrug and cushions were cosy; the plates were polished to good taste; there was a simplicity in everything, and plenty of food. He was

never ashamed in the least of his home, nor was Miriam of hers, because both were what they should be, and warm. And then he was proud of the table; the china was pretty, the cloth was fine. It did not matter that the spoons were not silver nor the knives ivory-handled: everything looked nice. Mrs. Morel had managed wonderfully while her children were growing up, so that nothing was out of place.

Miriam talked back a little. That was her unfailing topic. But Mrs. Morel was not cordial, and turned soon to Edgar.

At first Edgar and Miriam used to go into Mrs. Morel's pew. Morel never went to chapel, preferring the public-house. Mrs. Morel, like a little champion, sat at the head of her pew, Paul at the other end; and at first Miriam sat next to him. Then the chapel was like home. It was a snug place, with dark pews and silk, elegant pillars, and flowers. And the same people had sat in the same places ever since he was a boy. It was wonderfully sweet and soothing to sit there for an hour and a half, next to Miriam, and near to his mother, seeing his two loves under the spell of the place of worship. Then he felt warm and happy and religious at once. And after chapel he walked home with Miriam, while Mrs. Morel spent the rest of the evening with her old friend, Mrs. Burns. He was lonely alive on his walks on Sunday nights with Edgar and Miriam. He never went past the pews at night, by the lighted lamp-house, the tall black head-stocks and lines of tracks, past the faces appearing slowly like shadows, without the feeling of Miriam returning to him, lost and almost unbearable.

She did not very long occupy the Morel's pew. Her father took one for themselves soon more. It was under the little gallery, opposite the Morels'. When Paul and his mother came in the chapel the Leirsens' pew was always empty. He was anxious for fear she would not come: it was so far, and there were so many noisy Sundays. Then, often very late indeed, she came in, with her long stride, her head bowed, her face hidden under her hat of dark green velvet. Her face, as she sat opposite, was always in shadow. But it gave him a very keen feeling, as if all his soul stirred within him, to see her there. It was not the same glow, happiness, and pride, that he felt in having his mother in church: something more wonderful, less human, and tinged so intensely by a pain, as if there were something he could not get to.

At this time he was beginning to question the orthodox creed. He was nervous, and she was nervous. She was beginning to dread the spring: it became so wild, and hurt her so much. All the way he went crushingly smothering her belief. Edgar enjoyed it. He was by nature critical and rather dispositionless. But Miriam

sufficed exquisite pain, as, with an instinct like a knife, the man she loved examined her religion in which she lived and moved and had her being. But he did not spare her. He was cruel. And when they were alone he was even more fierce, as if he would kill her soul. He bled her beliefs till she almost lost consciousness.

"She melts—she melts as she carries him off from me," Mrs. Morel cried in her heart when Paul had gone. "She's not like an ordinary woman, who can leave me my share in him. She wants to absorb him. She wants to draw him out and absorb him till there is nothing left of him, even for himself. He will never be a man on his own feet—he will suck him up." So the mother sat, and brooded bitterly.

And he, coming home from his walks with Miriam, was wild with terror. He walked biting his lips and with clenched fist, going at a great rate. Then, brought up against a mile, he stood for some minutes, and did not move. There was a great hollow of darkness fronting him, and on the black upslugs patches of dry light, and in the lowest trough of the night, a flare of the pit. It was all weird and dreadful. Why was he torn so, almost bewildered, and unable to move? Why did his mother sit at home and suffer? He knew she suffered badly. But why should she? And why did he hate Miriam, and feel so cruel towards her, at the thought of his mother. If Miriam caused his mother suffering, then he hated her—and he really hated her. Why did she make him feel as if he were uncertain of himself, insecure, an indefinite thing, as if he had not sufficient strength to prevent the night and the space breaking into him? How he hated her! And then, what a rush of tenderness and humility!

Suddenly he plunged on again, running home. His mother saw on him the marks of some agony, and she said nothing. But he had to make her talk to him. Then she was angry with him for going so far with Miriam.

"Why don't you like her, mother?" he cried in despair.

"I don't know, my boy," she replied pitiously. "For years I've tried to like her. I've tried and tried, but I can't—I can't!"

And he felt dreary and hopeless between the two.

Spring was the worst time. He was changeable, and intense and cruel. So he decided to stay from her. Then came the hours when he knew Miriam was expecting him. His mother watched him growing restless. He could not go on with his work. He could do nothing. It was as if something were drawing his soul out towards Willey Farm. Then he put on his hat and went, saying nothing. And his mother knew he was gone. And as soon as he was on the

way he sighed with relief. And when he was with her he was cruel again.

One day in March he lay on the bank of Netherstone, with Miriam sitting beside him. It was a gleaming, white-and-blue day. Big clouds, so brilliant, went by overhead, while shadows stole along on the water. The clear spaces in the sky were of clear, cold blue. Paul lay on his back in the old grass, looking up. He could not bear to look at Miriam. She seemed to want him, and he refused. He refused all the time. He wanted now to give her passion and tenderness, and he could not. He felt that she wanted the soul out of his body, and not him. All his strength and energy she drew into herself through some channel which united them. She did not want to meet him, so that there were not of them, man and woman together. She wanted to draw all of him into her. He urged him to an intensity like madness, which fascinated him, as drug-taking might.

He was discussing Michael Angelo. It felt to her as if she were flogging the very quivering thorns, the very protuberances of life, as she heard him. It gave her her deepest satisfaction. And in the end it frightened her. There he lay in the white intensity of his search, and his voice gradually filled her with fear, so level it was, almost inhuman, as if it is a machine.

"Don't talk any more," she pleaded softly, laying her hand on his forehead.

He lay quite still, almost unable to move. His body was somehow distended.

"Why not? Are you tired?"

"Yes, and it wears you out."

He laughed shortly, realising.

"For you always make me like it," he said.

"I don't wish to," she said, very low.

"Not when you've gone too far, and you feel you can't bear it. But your unconscious self always takes it of me. And I suppose I want it."

He went on, in his dead fashion:

"If only you could want me, and not want what I can feel off for you!"

"If?" she cried bitterly—"If? Why, when would you let me take you?"

"Then it's my fault," he said, and, gathering himself together, he got up and began to talk crystallogically. He felt unchained. In a vague way he hated her for it. And he knew he was as much to blame himself. This, however, did not prevent his hating her.

STARF IN LOVE

One evening about this time he had walked along the home road with her. They stood by the pasture leading down to the wood, unable to part. As the stars came out the clouds dissolved. They had glimpses of their own constellation, Orion, towards the west. His jewels glimmered for a moment, his dog ran low, struggling with difficulty through the spaces of clouds.

Orion was for them chief in significance among the constellations. They had gazed at him in their strong, recharged hours of feeling, until they seemed themselves to live in every one of his stars. This evening Paul had been moody and perverse. Orion had seemed just an ordinary constellation to him. He had fought against his glamour and fascination. Miriam was watching her lover's mood carefully. But he said nothing that gave him away, till the moment came to part, when he stood frowning gloomily at the gathered clouds, behind which the great constellation must be hiding still.

There was to be a little party at his house the next day, at which she was to attend.

"I shan't come to meet you," he said.

"Oh, very well; it's not very nice of you," she replied slowly.

"It's not that—only they don't like me so. They say I care more for you than for them. And you understand, don't you? You know it's only friendship."

Miriam was astonished and hurt for him. It had cost him an effort. She left him, warning to spare him any further humiliations. A fine rain blew in her face as she walked along the road. She was hurt deep down; and she despised him for being blown about by any wind of authority. And in her heart of hearts, unconsciously, she felt that he was trying to get away from her. This she would never have acknowledged. She pined him.

At this time Paul became an important factor in Jordan's household. Mr. Pappleworth left to set up a business of his own, and Paul remained with Mr. Jordan as general overseer. His wages were to be raised to thirty shillings at the year-end, if things went well.

Still on Friday night Miriam often came down the long French leaves. Paul did not go so frequently to Willey Farm, and she grieved at the thought of her education's coming to an end; moreover, they both loved to be together, in spite of discord. So they read Balzac, and did compositions, and did highly cultured.

Friday night was reckoning night for the women. Most "reckoned"—shared up the money of the mail—either in the New Inn at Brerly or in his own house, according to his fellow-traveller visited. Barker had turned a non-drinker, so now the men reckoned at Moore's house.

Annie, who had been teaching away, was at home again. She was still a nobody, and she was engaged to be married. Paul was studying design.

Moral was always in good spirits on Friday evening, unless the week's earnings were small. He hurried immediately after his dinner, prepared to get washed. It was decorum for the women to absent themselves while the men undressed. Women were not supposed to pry into such a masculine privacy as the bathers' neckties, nor were they to know the exact amount of the week's earnings. So, while her father was splashing in the scullery Annie went out to spend an hour with a neighbour. Mrs. Moral attended to her bathing.

"That's that doc-er!" bawled Moral furiously.

Annie knaged it behind her, and was gone.

"If the oppers is again while I'm washin' me, I'll make the jaw rattle," he threatened from the radius of his soapuds. Paul and the mother frowned to hear him.

Presently he came running out of the scullery, with the soapy water dripping from him, dithering with cold.

"Oh, my air!" he said. "Whose my towel?"

It was hung on a chair to warm before the fire, otherwise he would have huffed and blustered. He squatted on his heels before the bar, looking-fire to dry himself.

"F-f-f!" he went, pretending to shudder with cold.

"Goodness, man, don't be such a kid!" said Mrs. Moral. "It's not cold."

"There ain't nothin' such as it'd to wash dry flesh in that scullery," said the minor, as he rubbed his hair. "nowt b'r a lee-wind!"

"And I shouldn't make that face," replied his wife.

"No, she'd drop down stiff, as dead as a doornail, w' the wind blows."

"Why is a doornail colder than anything else?" asked Paul, curious.

"Eh, I dunno; that's what they say," replied his father.

"But there's that much draught in yon scullery, as it blows through your ribs like through a five-barred gate!"

"It would have some difficulty in blowing through yours," said Mrs. Moral.

Moral looked down ruefully at his ribs.

"Ma!" he exclaimed. "I'm nowt b'r a dilapidated rabbit. My bones fair juts out on me!"

"I should like to know where," retorted his wife.

"In yon scullery! I've nabeen a wash o' luggies."

Mrs. Moral laughed. He had still a wonderfully young body,

vascular, without any fat. His skin was smooth and clear. It might have been the body of a man of twenty-eight, except that these were, perhaps, too many blue scars, like tarzan-marks, where the coal-dust remained under the skin, and that his chest was too hairy. But he put his hand on his sides rapidly. It was his fixed belief that, because he did not get fat, he was as thin as a starved rat.

Paul looked at his father's thick, brownish hands all scarred, with broken nails, rubbing the fine smoothness of his sides, and the incongruity struck him. It seemed strange they were the same flesh.

"I suppose," he said to his father, "you had a good figure once."

"Eh!" exclaimed the minee, glowing round, startled and timid, like a child.

"He had," exclaimed Mrs. Morel, "if he didn't haul himself up as if he was trying to get in the smallest space he could."

"Me!" exclaimed Morel—"no a good figure! I was almost much more n't a skeleton."

"Man!" cried his wife, "don't be such a polemizer!"

"Stewards!" he said. "That silver knaved me but what I looked as if I wor goin' off in a rapid decline."

She sat and laughed.

"You've had a constitution like iron," she said; "and even a man had a better start, if it was body that counted. You should have seen him as a young man," she cried suddenly to Paul, drawing herself up to imitate her husband's once handsome bearing.

Paul watched her shyly. He saw again the passion she had had for him. It blazed upon her for a moment. He was shy, rather scared, and humble. Yet again he felt his old glow. And then immediately he felt the pain he had made during those years. He wanted to haule about, to run away from it.

"GI'e my back a bit of a work," he asked her.

His wife brought a well-shaped flannel and clapped it on his shoulder. He gave a jump.

"Eh, the meaky little 'un!" he cried. "Cowed as death!"

"You ought to have been a salamander," she laughed, working his back. It was very surely she would do anything so personal for him. The children did those things.

"The next would won't be half hot enough for you," she added.

"No," he said; "tha'tt see as it's draughty for me."

But she had laughed. She wiped him in a douchery fashion, and went upstairs, returning immediately with his shifting-storm. When he was dried he struggled into his shirt. Then, ruddy and shiny, with hair on end, and his flannel-shirt hanging over his

pit-trousers, he stood was using the garments he was going to put on. He turned them, he pulled them inside out, he examined them.

"Goodness, man!" cried Mrs. Morel: "get dressed!"

"Shouldn't you like to clap rhyes into breeches as cold as a rail o' water?" he said.

At last he took off his pit-trousers and donned decent black. He did all this on the hearthrug, as he would have done if Annie and her familiar friends had been present.

Mrs. Morel turned the bread in the oven. Then from the red earthenware pantheon of dough that stood in a corner she took another handful of paste, worked it to the proper shape, and dropped it into a tin. As she was doing so Barker brooded and snarled. He was a quiet, compact little man, who looked as if he would go through a stone wall. His black hair was cropped short, his head was long. Like most miners, he was pale, but healthy and stout.

"Eyesie', mine," he nodded to Mrs. Morel, and he rested himself with a sigh.

"Good-evening," she replied cordially.

"That's made thy back crack," said Morel.

"I dance as I have," said Barker.

Then, as the men always did in Mrs. Morel's kitchen, affecting himself rather.

"Eyesie' mine!" she asked of him.

He had told her some time back:

"We're eyesie's' as third just now, you see."

"Well," he answered, rubbing his head, "the keeps pretty middlin', I think."

"Let's see—when?" asked Mrs. Morel.

"Well, I shouldn't be surprised any time now."

"Ain't And she's kept fairly?"

"Yes, tidy."

"That's a blessing, for she's come too strong."

"No. Ain't I've done another silly trick?"

"What's that?"

Mrs. Morel knew Barker wouldn't do anything very silly.

"I've come be-out th' market-bag."

"You can have mine."

"May, you'll be wantin' that yourself!"

"I shan't. I take a string bag always."

She saw the determined little codder buying in the week's groceries and meat on the Friday night, and she admired him. "Barker's little, but he's ten times the man you are," she said to her husband.

Just then Wences entered. He was thin, rather fishhooked, with a boyish ingenuousness and a slightly foolish smile, despite his seven children. But his wife was a passionate woman.

"I see you've heard me," he said, smiling rather rapidly.

"Yes," replied Barker.

The newcomer took off his cap and his big wooden mallet. His suit was pressed and neat.

"I'm afraid you're cold, Mr. Wences," said Mrs. Mord.

"It's a hot riggy," he replied.

"Then come to the fire."

"Nay, I o'll do where I am."

Both withdrew out away back. They could not be induced to come as far as the hearth. The hearth is sacred to the family.

"Go thy ways t' th' main-chair," cried Mord cheerily.

"Nay, thank yer; I'm very nicely here."

"You, come, of course," insisted Mrs. Mord.

He rose and went reluctantly. He sat in Mord's arm-chair reluctantly. It was too great a familiarity. But the fire made him blissfully happy.

"And how's that chest of yours?" demanded Mrs. Mord.

He smiled again, with his blue eyes rather sunny.

"Oh, it's very middlin'," he said.

"Wi' a rattin in it like a little drum," said Barker shortly.

"T-r-r-r!" went Mrs. Mord rapidly with her tongue. "Did you have that famous single made?"

"Not yet," he smiled.

"Then, why didn't you?" she cried.

"I'll come," he smiled.

"Ah, an' Deemselv!" exclaimed Barker.

Barker and Mord were both impatient of Wences. Yet, then, they were both as hard as nails, physically.

When Mord was nearly ready he pushed the bag of money to Paul.

"Count it, boy," he asked humbly.

Paul impatiently turned from his books and pencil, dipped the bag upside down on the table. There was a five-pound bag of silver, sovereigns and loose money. He counted quickly, referred to the checks—the various papers giving account of coal—put the money in order. Then Barker glanced at the checks.

Mrs. Mord went upstairs, and the three men came to table. Mord, as master of the house, sat in his arm-chair, with his back to the hot fire. The two butlers had colder seats. None of them counted the money.

"What did we say Simpson's was?" asked Mord; and the

hastily called for a minute into the dayman's earnings. Then the account was put aside.

"As! Ill Naylor's?"

This money was also taken from the pack.

Then, because Morden lived in one of the company's houses, and his rent had been deducted, Mord and Barker took four-and-six each. And because Mord's coat had come, and the leading was stopped, Barker and Morden took four shillings each. Then it was plain sailing. Mord gave each of them a sovereign till there were no more sovereigns; each half a crown till there were no more half-crowns; each a shilling till there were no more shillings. If there was anything at the end that wouldn't split, Mord took it and used drink.

Then the three men rose and went. Mord scouted out of the house before his wife came down. She turned the key close, and descended. She looked hastily at the bread in the oven. Then, glancing on the table, she saw her money lying. Paul had been working all the time. But now he felt his mother counting the week's money, and her week riding.

"Funnist!" noted her tongue.

He frowned. He could not work when she was cross. She counted again.

"A lovely twenty-five shillings!" she exclaimed. "How much was the cheque?"

"Ten pounds eleven," said Paul irritably. He decided what was coming.

"And he gives me a splendid twenty-five, as' his d'at this week! But I know him. He thinks because you're running he won't keep the house any longer. No, all he has to do with his money is to gamble it. But I'll show him!"

"Oh, mother, don't!" cried Paul.

"Don't what, I should like to know?" she exclaimed.

"Don't carry on again. I can't work."

She went very quiet.

"Yes, it's all very well," she said; "but how do you think I'm going to manage?"

"Well, it won't make it any better to whine about it."

"I should like to know what you'd do if you had it to put up with."

"It won't be long. You can have my money. Let him go to hell."

He went back to his work, and she did her housework grimly. When she was forced he could not hear it. But now he began to think on his recognizing him.

STRIFE IN LOVE

"The two leaves at the top," she said, "will be done in twenty minutes. Don't forget them."

"All right," he answered; and she went to market.

He remained alone working. But his usual intense concentration became unsteady. He listened for the yodel-pipe. At a quarter-past seven came a low knock, and Miriam entered.

"All alone?" she said.

"Yes."

As if at home, she took off her tippet, shawl and her long coat, hanging them up. It gave him a thrill. This might be their own house, his and hers. Then she came back and peered over his work.

"What is it?" she asked.

"Skill design, for decorating stuff, and for embroidery."

She bent thoughtfully over the drawings.

It irritated him that she peered so into everything that was his, snatching him out. He went into the parlour and returned with a bundle of brownish linen. Carefully unfolding it, he spread it on the floor. It proved to be a curtain or jerid, beautifully decorated with a design on roses.

"Ah, how beautiful!" she cried.

The spread cloth, with its wonderful reddish roses and dark green stems, all so simple, and somehow so wicked-looking, lay at her feet. She went on her knees before it, her dark curls dropping. Miriam had installed voluptuously before his work, and his heart beat quickly. Suddenly she looked up at him.

"Why does it seem cruel?" she asked.

"Why?"

"There seems a feeling of cruelty about it," she said.

"It's jolly good, whether or not," he replied, folding up his work with a lover's hands.

She rose slowly, pondering.

"And what will you do with it?" she asked.

"Send it to Liberty's. I did it for my mother, but I think she'd rather have the money."

"Yes," said Miriam. He had spoken with a touch of bitterness, and Miriam sympathised. Money would have been nothing to her.

He took the cloth back into the parlour. When he returned, he there to Miriam a smaller piece. It was a cushion-cover with the same design.

"I did that for you," he said.

She fingered the work with trembling hands, and did not speak. He became embarrassed.

"By Jove, she herself!" he cried.

He took the top leaves out, tapped them vigorously. They were

done. He put them on the hearth to cool. Then he went to the scullery, washed his hands, scooped the last white dough out of the panishes, and dropped it in a baking-tin. Miriam was still bent over her pinned cloth. He stood rubbing the bits of dough from his hands.

"You do like it?" he asked.

She looked up at him, with her dark eyes and flame of lips. He laughed uncomfortably. Then he began to talk about the designs. There was for him the most intense pleasure in talking about his work to Miriam. All his passion, all his wild blood, went into this intercourse with her, when he talked and conceived his work. She brought forth to him his imaginations. She did not understand, any more than a woman understands when she receives a child in her womb. But this was life for her and for him.

While they were talking, a young woman of about twenty-two, small and pale, hollow-eyed, yet with a radiant look about her, entered the room. She was a friend of the Jewels'.

"Take your things off," said Paul.

"No, I'm not stopping."

She sat down in the arm-chair opposite Paul and Miriam, who were on the sofa. Miriam moved a little farther from him. The room was hot, with a scent of new bread. Brown, crisp leaves stood on the hearth.

"I shouldn't have expected to see you here to-night, Miriam Loren," said Beatrice wickedly.

"Why not?" murmured Miriam hostilely.

"Why, let's look at your shoes."

Miriam remained uncomformably still.

"If this does the dirty on," laughed Beatrice.

Miriam put her feet from under her dress. Her face had that queer, bromide, rather pathetic look about them, which showed how self-conscious and self-conscious she was. And they were covered with mud.

"Glorious! You're a positive mud-heap," exclaimed Beatrice.

"Wipe down your boots?"

"I clean them myself."

"Then you wanted a job," said Beatrice. "It would be' taken a lot of men as he' brought me down here to-night. But here laughs at shoddy, doesn't it, 'Pardie my duddie?'"

"Jaw all," he said.

"Oh, Lord! are you going to speak foreign languages? What does it mean, Miriam?"

There was a fine sarcasm in the last question, but Miriam did not see it.

" 'Among other things,' I believe," she said haughtily.

Beatrice put her tongue between her teeth and laughed wickedly.

" 'Among other things,' 'Poodle' " she repeated. " Do you mean love laughs at mothers, and fathers, and aunts, and brothers and men friends, and lady friends, and even at the beloved himself? " She affected a great innocence.

" In fact, it's not big souls," he replied.

" Up to sleeve, Poodle Mord—*you* believe me," she said; and she went off into another burst of wicked, silent laughter.

Miriam sat silent, withdrawn into herself. Everyone of Paul's friends delighted in taking sides against her, and he left her in the lurch—armed almost to have a war of revenge upon her them.

" Are you still at school? " asked Miriam of Beatrice.

" Yes."

" You've not had your vacation, then? "

" I expect it at Easter."

" Isn't it an awful shame, to turn you off merely because you didn't pass the exam? "

" I don't know," said Beatrice coldly.

" Agatha says you're as good as any teacher anywhere. It seems to me ridiculous. I wonder why you didn't pass."

" Short of brains, oh 'Poodle' " said Beatrice briefly.

" Only braver to hate with," replied Paul, laughing.

" Muzzum! " she cried; and, springing from her seat, she rushed and boxed his ears. She had beautiful small hands. He told her when she wrestled with him. As fast she broke free, and seized two handfuls of his thick, dark brown hair, which she shook.

" Beut! " he said, as he pulled his hair straight with his fingers.

" I hate you! "

She laughed with glee.

" Muzz! " she said. " I want to sit next to you."

" I'd as lief be neighbours with a whore," he said, nevertheless making place for her between him and Miriam.

" Did it ruffle his pretty hair, then? " she cried; and, with her hair-comb, she combed him straight. " And his nice little moustache? " she exclaimed. She tilted his head back and combed his young moustache. " It's a wicked moustache, 'Poodle,' she said. " It's a real fire-dancer. Have you got any of those cigarettes? "

He pulled his cigarette-case from his pocket. Beatrice looked inside it.

" And fancy me having Garcia's best rig," said Beatrice, putting the thing between her teeth. He held a lit match to her, and she pulled delicately.

" Thanks so much, darling," she said mockingly.

It gave her a wicked delight.

"Don't you think he *does* it nicely, Miriam?" she asked.

"Oh, very!" said Miriam.

He took a cigarette for himself.

"Light, old boy?" said Beatrice, offering her cigarette to him.

He bent forward to her to light his cigarette at hers. She was winking at him as he did so. Miriam saw his eyes trembling with mischief, and his full, almost sensual, mouth quivering. He was not himself, and she could not hear it. As he was now, she had no connexion with him; she might as well not have entered. She saw the cigarette dancing on his full red lips. She hated his thick hair for being crumpled down on his forehead.

"Sweet boy!" said Beatrice, tipping up his chin and giving him a little kiss on the cheek.

"I'll kiss thee back, Beat," he said.

"This woman!" she giggled, jumping up and going away.

"Isn't he shameless, Miriam?"

"Quiet," said Miriam. "By the way, aren't you forgetting the bread?"

"By Jove!" he cried, flinging open the oven-door.

Out pulled the bluish smoke and a smell of burned bread.

"Oh, golly!" cried Beatrice, coming to his side. He crouched before the oven, she peered over his shoulder. "This is what comes of the abolition of love, my boy."

Paul was carefully removing the loaves. One was burnt black on the hot side; another was hard as a brick.

"Poor man!" said Paul.

"You want to grate it," said Beatrice. "Fetch me the nutmeg-grater."

She arranged the bread in the oven. He brought the grater, and she grated the bread on to a newspaper on the table. He set the doors open to blow away the smell of burned bread. Beatrice grated away, pulling her cigarette, knocking the charcoal off the poor loaf.

"My word, Miriam! you're in for it this time," said Beatrice.

"It" exclaimed Miriam in amazement.

"You'd better be gone when his mother comes in. I know why King Alfred burned the cakes. Now I see it! 'Poodle would fix up a tale about his work: making him finger it, if he thought it would wash. If that old woman had come in a bit sooner, she'd have heard the brown thing's ears who made the abolition, instead of poor Alfred's."

She giggled as she scraped the loaf. Even Miriam laughed in spite of herself. Paul minded the fire carefully.

The garden-gate was heard to bang.

"Quick!" cried Beatrice, giving Paul the wrapped loaf. "Wrap it up in a damp towel!"

Paul disappeared into the scullery. Beatrice hastily blew her wrappings into the fire, and sat down immediately. Annie came hurrying in. She was an abrupt, quite smart young woman. She blushed in the strong light.

"Smell of burning!" she exclaimed.

"It's the cigarettes," replied Beatrice demurely.

"Where's Paul?"

Leonard had followed Annie. He had a long comic face and blue eyes, very sad.

"I suppose he's left you to settle it between you," he said. He smiled sympathetically to Miriam, and became gently sarcastic to Beatrice.

"No," said Beatrice, "he's gone off with number nine."

"I just met number five inquiring for him," said Leonard.

"Yes—we're going to share him up like Solomon's baby," said Beatrice.

Annie laughed.

"Oh, ay," said Leonard. "And which bit should you have?"

"I don't leave," said Beatrice. "I'll let all the others pick first."

"Are you'd have the leavings, then?" said Leonard, looking up a comic face.

Annie was looking to the oven. Miriam sat ignored. Paul entered.

"This bread's a fine sight, our Paul," said Annie.

"Then you should stop and look after it," said Paul.

"You mean you should do what you're reckoning to do," replied Annie.

"He should, shouldn't he?" cried Beatrice.

"I don't think he'd get plenty on hand," said Leonard.

"You had a merry walk, didn't you, Miriam?" said Annie.

"Yes—but I'd been in all weathers—"

"And you worried a bit of a change, like," indicated Leonard kindly.

"Well you can't be stuck in the house for ever," Annie agreed. She was quite amiable. Beatrice pulled on her coat, and went out with Leonard and Annie. She would meet her own boy.

"Don't forget that bread, our Paul," cried Annie. "Good night, Miriam. I don't think it will rain."

When they had all gone, Paul touched the swathed loaf, unwrapped it, and surveyed it sadly.

"It's a mess!" he said.

"But," answered Miriam impatiently, "what is it, after all—twopenny ha'penny?"

"Yes, but—it's the master's precious baking, and she'll take it to heart. However, it's no good bickering."

He took the loaf back into the scullery. There was a little distance between him and Miriam. He stood balanced opposite her for some moments considering, thinking of his behaviour with Beatrice. He felt guilty inside himself, and yet glad. For some incredible reason it served Miriam right. He was not going to repent. She wondered what he was thinking of as he stood suspended. His thick hair was tumbled over his forehead. Why might she not push it back for him, and stroke the marks of Beatrice's comb? Why might she not press his body with her two hands. It looked so firm, and every whit living. And he would be other girls, why not her?

Suddenly he started into life. It made her quiver almost with terror as he quickly pushed the hair off his forehead and came towards her.

"Half-past eight!" he said. "We'd better back up. Where's your French?"

Miriam shyly and rather blantly produced her exercise-book. Every week she wrote for him a sort of diary of her inner life, in her own French. He had found this was the only way to get her to do compositions. And her diary was mostly a love-letter. He would read it now; she felt as if her soul's history were going to be dominated by him in his present mood. He sat beside her. She watched his hand, firm and warm, vigorously mending her work. He was reading only the French, ignoring her soul that was there. But gradually his hand forgot to work. He read in silence, motionless. She quivered.

"*Ce matin les oiseaux m'ont éveillé,*" he read. "*Il faisait encore un crépuscule. Mais la petite fenêtre de ma chambre était bleue, et pais, jaune, et tout les oiseaux du bois débattaient dans un chanton et se remuant. Toute l'air tremblait. J'avais rêvé de vous. En-ce que vous voyez ainsi l'air? Les oiseaux m'trouillaient presque tous les matins, et toujours il y a quelque chose de toujours dans le ciel des grises. Il est si clair—*"

Miriam sat tremulous, half-submerged. He remained quite still, trying to understand. He only knew she loved him. He was afraid of her love for him. It was too good for him, and he was inadequate. His own love was a shaft, not hers. Ashamed, he corrected her work, harshly writing above her words.

"Look," he said quietly, "the past participle conjugated with *être* agrees with the direct object when it precedes."

She bent forward, trying to see and to understand. Her long, fine curls tickled his face. He started as if they had been red hot, shuddering. He saw her peering forward at the page, her red lips parted peacefully, the black hair springing in fine wreaths across her temples, noddily down. She was coloured like a pomegranate for richness. His breath came short as he watched her. Suddenly she looked up at him. Her dark eyes were naked with their love, afraid, and yearning. His eyes, too, were dark, and they met hers. They seemed to master her. She lost all her self-control, was exposed in fear. And he knew, before he could kiss her, he must drive something out of himself. And a touch of hate for her crept back again into his heart. He returned to her exercises.

Suddenly he flung down the pencil, and was at the oven in a leap, turning the bread. For Miriam he was too quick. She started violently, and it hurt her with real pain. Even the way he crouched before the oven hurt her. There seemed to be something cruel in it, something cruel in the swift way he plucked the bread out of the tin, caught it up again. Hasty he had been gentle in his movements she would have felt so rich and warm. As it was, she was hurt.

He returned and finished the exercise.

"You've done well this week," he said.

She saw he was flattered by her diary. It did not repay her sadly.

"You really do blossom out sometimes," he said. "You ought to write poetry."

She lifted her head with joy, then she shook it untractably.

"I don't trust myself," she said.

"You should try!"

Again she shook her head.

"Shall we read, or is it too late?" he asked.

"It is late—but we can read just a little," she pleaded.

She was really getting now the food for her life during the next week. He made her copy Baudelaire's *Le Balcon*. Then he read it for her. His voice was soft and caressing, but growing almost brutal. He had a way of filling his lips and showing his teeth, passionately and bitterly, when he was much moved. This he did now. It made Miriam feel as if he were trampling on her. She dared not look at him, but sat with her head bowed. She could not understand why he got into such a tumult and fury. It made her wretched. She did not like Baudelaire, on the whole—not Verlaine.

"Behold her singing in the field
Yon solitary highland lair."

That nourished her heart. So did "Fair Inn". And—

"It was a beautiful evening, calm and pure,
And breathing holy quiet like a nun."

There was like herself. And there was he, saying in his throat
bitterly:

"Tu es rappeleine à l'habiter des carmen."

The poem was finished; he took the book out of the cover, arranging the burnt leaves at the bottom of the parchment, the good ones at the top. The designated leaf remained crumpled up in the scullery.

"Missus needn't know till morning," he said. "I wasn't upset for so much then as at night."

Missus looked in the bookcase, saw what postcards and letters he had received, saw what books were there. She took one that had interested him. Then he turned down the gas and they set off. He did not trouble to lock the door.

He was not home again until a quarter to eleven. His mother was seated in the rocking-chair. Annie, with a rope of hair hanging down her back, remained sitting on a low stool before the fire, her elbows on her knees, gloomily. On the table stood the offending leaf crumpled. Paul stared rather breathless. No one spoke. His mother was reading the Irish local newspaper. He took off his coat, and went to sit down on the sofa. His mother moved nimbly aside to let him pass. No one spoke. He was very uncomfortable. For some minutes he sat pretending to read a piece of paper he found on the table. Then—

"I forgot that bread, mother," he said.

There was no answer from either woman.

"Well," he said, "it's only twopenny ha'penny. I can pay you for that."

Being angry he put three pence on the table, and slid them towards his mother. She turned away her head. Her mouth was shut tightly.

"Yes," said Annie, "you don't know how badly my mother is." The girl sat staring glumly into the fire.

"Why is she badly?" asked Paul, in his overhearing way.

"Well," said Annie, "she could scarcely get home."

He looked closely at his mother. (She looked ill.)

"How could you scarcely get home?" he asked her, still sharply. She would not answer.

"I found her as white as a sheet sitting here," said Annie, with a suggestion of tears in her voice.

"Well, why?" insisted Paul. His brows were knitting, his eyes staring passionately.

"It was enough to upset anybody," said Mrs. Morel, "hugging those parcels—cheese, and green-peas, and a pair of curtains—"

"Well, why did you hug them; you needn't have done."

"Then who would?"

"Let Annie fetch the meat."

"Yes, and I would fetch the meat, but how was I to know. You were off with Miriam, instead of being in when my mother came."

"And what was that matter with you?" asked Paul of his mother.

"I suppose it's my heart," she replied. Certainly she looked bright round the mouth.

"And have you felt it before?"

"Yes—often enough."

"Then why haven't you told me?—and why haven't you seen a doctor?"

Mrs. Morel shifted in her chair, angry with him for his harping.

"You'd never notice anything," said Annie. "You're too eager to be off with Miriam."

"Oh, am I—and any more than you with Leonard?"

"I was in at a quarter to ten."

There was silence in the room for a time.

"I should have thought," said Mrs. Morel sharply, "that she wouldn't have occupied you so entirely as to burn a whole ovenful of bread."

"Elizabeth was here as well as she."

"Very likely. But we know why the bread is spoilt."

"Why?" he asked.

"Because you were engrossed with Miriam," replied Mrs. Morel hotly.

"Oh, very well—there it was and " he replied angrily.

He was disarmed and wretched. Seizing a paper, he began to read. Annie, her blouse unfastened, her long rings of hair twisted into a pile, went up to bed, wishing him a very good-night.

Paul sat poring over his read. He knew his mother wanted to upbraid him. He also wanted to know what had made her ill, for he was troubled. So, instead of running away to bed, as he would have liked to do, he sat and waited. There was a tense silence. The clock ticked loudly.

"You'd better go to bed before your father comes in," said the mother harshly. "And if you've going to have anything to eat, you'd better get it."

"I don't want anything."

It was his mother's custom to bring him some trifle for supper on Friday night, the night of luxury for the colliers. He was too angry to go and find it in the pantry this night. This incensed her.

"If I wanted you to go to Kelly on Friday night, I can imagine the street," said Mrs. Moral. "But you're never too tired to go if she will come for you. May, you neither want to eat nor drink then."

"I can't let her go alone."

"Can't you? And why does she come?"

"Not because I ask her."

"She doesn't come without you want her——"

"Well, what if I do want her——" he replied.

"Why, nothing, if it was sensible or reasonable. But to go tramping up there miles and miles in the mud, coming home at midnight, and get to go to Nottingham in the morning——"

"If I hadn't, you'd be just the same."

"Yes, I should, because there's no rest in it. Is she so fascinating that you must follow her all that way?" Mrs. Moral was bitterly sarcastic. She sat still, with averted face, smoking with a rhythmic, jerried movement, the black pattern of her apron. It was a movement that hurt Paul to see.

"I do like her," he said, "but——"

"Like her!" said Mrs. Moral, in the same biting tone. "It seems to me you like nothing and nobody else. There's neither Anne, nor me, nor anyone else for you."

"What nonsense, mother—you know I don't love her—I tell you I don't love her—she doesn't even walk with my arm, because I don't want her so."

"Then why do you fly to her so often?"

"I do like to talk to her—I never said I didn't. But I don't love her."

"Is there nobody else to talk to?"

"Not about the things we talk of. There's lots of things that you're not interested in, that——"

"What things?"

Mrs. Moral was so intense that Paul began to pant.

"Why—politics—and books. You don't care about Herbert Spencer."

"No," was the sad reply. "And you won't at my age."

"Well, but I do now—and William does——"

"And how do you know," Mrs. Moral flamed defiantly, "that I shouldn't. Do you ever try me?"

"But you don't, mother, you know you don't care whether a picture's decorative or not; you don't care what name it is in."

"How do you know I don't care! Do you ever try me? Do you ever talk to me about these things, to try?"

"But it's not that that matters to you, mother, you know it's not."

"What is it, then—what is it, then, that matters to me?" she flushed. He lowered his brows with pain.

"You're old, mother, and we're young."

He only meant that the interests of her age were not the interests of his. But he realized the moment he had spoken that he had said the wrong thing.

"Yes, I know it well—I am old. And therefore I may stand aside; I have nothing more to do with you. You only want me to suit my pace—the rest is for children."

He could not bear it. Instinctively he realized that he was life to her. And after all, she was the chief thing to him, the only supreme thing.

"You know it isn't, mother, you know it isn't."

She was moved to pity by his cry.

"It looks a great deal like it," she said, half putting aside her despair.

"His mother—I really don't love her. I talk to her, but I want to come home to you."

He had taken off his collar and tie, and rose, bare-throated, to go to bed. As he stooped to kiss his mother, she threw her arms round his neck, hid her face on his shoulder, and cried, in a whispering voice, so unlike her own that he writhed in agony:

"I can't bear it. I could let another woman—but not her. She'd leave me no room, not a bit of room——"

And immediately he hated Miriam bitterly.

"And I've never—you know, Paul—I've never had a husband—not really——"

He stroked his mother's hair, and his mouth was on her throat.

"And she waits on in talking you down to me—she's not like ordinary girls."

"Well, I don't love her, mother," he murmured, bowing his head and hiding his eyes on her shoulder in misery. His mother kissed him a long, fervent kiss.

"My boy!" she said, in a voice trembling with passionate love.

Without knowing, he gently stroked her face.

"There," said his mother, "now go to bed. You'll be as tired in the morning." As she was speaking she heard her husband coming. "There's your father—now go." Suddenly she looked at him almost as if in fear. "Perhaps I'm selfish. If you want her, take her, my boy."

His mother looked so strange, Paul kissed her, trembling.

"Ha—mother!" he said softly.

Moorl came in, walking unsteadily. His hat was over one corner of his eye. He balanced in the doorway.

"At your mischief again?" he said vehemently.

Mrs. Moorl's emotion turned into sudden hate of the drunken who had come in that open hat.

"At any rate, it is sober," she said.

"H'm—h'm! H'm—h'm!" he muttered. He went into the passage, hung up his hat and coat. Then they heard him go down three steps to the pantry. He returned with a piece of pork-pie in his hat. It was what Mrs. Moorl had bought for her son.

"Nor was that bought for you. If you can give me no more than twenty-five shillings, I'm sure I'm not going to buy you pork-pie to stuff, after you've swilled a bellyful of beer."

"Wha-at—wha-at!" started Moorl, toppling in his balance. "Wha-at—can I eat?" He looked at the piece of meat and crust, and suddenly, in a vicious spurt of temper, flung it into the fire.

Paul started to his feet.

"Waste your own stuff!" he cried.

"What—what?" suddenly shouted Moorl, jumping up and clenching his fist. "I'll show you, you young jockey!"

"All right!" said Paul vigorously, putting his head on one side. "Show me!"

He would at that moment dearly have loved to have a smack at something. Moorl was half-crouching, flat up, ready to spring. The young man stood, smiling with his lips.

"Unlial!" blurted the father, sniping round with a great stroke just past his son's feet. He dared not, even though so close, really touch the young man, but reversed an inch away.

"Right!" said Paul, his eyes upon the side of his father's mouth, where in another instant his fist would have hit. He asked for that stroke. But he heard a faint noise from behind. His mother was deadily pale, and dark as the mantle. Moorl was dancing up to deliver another blow.

"Father!" said Paul, so that the word rang.

Moorl started, and stood at attention.

"Mother!" muttered the boy. "Mother!"

She began to struggle with herself. Her open eyes watched him, although she could not move. Gradually she was coming to herself. He held her down on the sofa, and ran upstairs for a little whisky, which at last she could sip. The tears were hopping down his face. As he knelt in front of her he did not cry, but the tears ran down his face quickly. Moorl, on the opposite side of the room, sat with elbows on his knees glaring across.

"What's a-matter with 'er?" he asked.

"Faint!" replied Paul.

"H'm!"

The elderly man began to unlock his boots. He stumbled off to bed. His last fight was fought in that house.

Paul knelted there, stroking his mother's hand.

"Don't be poorly, mother—don't be poorly!" he said time after time.

"It's nothing, my boy," she murmured.

At last he rose, soaked in a large piece of coal, and relaid the fire. Then he cleared the room, put everything straight, laid the things for breakfast, and brought his mother's candle.

"Can you go to bed, mother?"

"Yes, I'll come."

"Sleep with Annie, mother, not with him."

"No. I'll sleep in my own bed."

"Don't sleep with him, mother."

"I'll sleep in my own bed."

She rose, and he turned out the gas, then followed her closely upstairs, carrying her candle. On the landing he kissed her close.

"Good-night, mother."

"Good-night!" she said.

He pressed his face upon the pillow in a fury of misery. And yet, somewhere in his soul, he was at peace because he still loved his mother best. It was the bitter peace of resignation.

The efforts of his father to console him next day were a great humiliation to him.

Everybody tried to forget the scene.

Defect of Miriam

Paul was dissatisfied with himself and with everything. The deepest of his love belonged to his mother. When he felt he had hurt her, or wounded his love for her, he could not bear it. Now it was spring, and there was battle between him and Miriam. This year he had a good deal against her. She was vaguely aware of it. The old feeling that she was to be a sacrifice to his love, which she had had when she prayed, was mingled in all her emotions. She did not as the others believe she ever would leave him. She did not believe in herself primarily; doubted whether she could ever be what he would demand of her. Certainly she never saw herself living happily through a lifetime with him. She saw tragedy, sorrow, and sacrifice ahead. And in sacrifice she was proud, in renunciation she was strong, for she did not trust herself to support everyday life. She was prepared for the big things and the deep things, like tragedy. It was the sufficiency of the small day-life she could not trust.

The Easter holidays began happily. Paul was his own frank self. Yet she felt it would go wrong. On the Sunday afternoon she stood at her bedroom window, looking across at the oak-trees of the wood, in whose branches a twilight was tangled, below the bright sky of the afternoon. Grey-green rosettes of honeysuckle leaves hung before the window, some already, she fancied, showing bud. It was spring, which she loved and dreaded.

Hearing the clack of the gate she stood in suspense. It was a bright grey day. Paul came into the yard with his bicycle, which glimmered as he walked. Usually he rang his bell and laughed towards the house. To-day he walked with shut lips and cold, cruel bearing, that had something of a death and a sneer in it. She knew him well by now, and could tell from that hound-looking, stoof young body of his what was happening inside him. There was a cold correctness in the way he put his bicycle in its place, that made her heart sick.

She came downstairs nervously. She was wearing a new red blouse that she thought became her. It had a high collar with a tiny ruff, reminding her of Mary, Queen of Scots, and making her, she thought, look wonderfully a woman, and dignified. At twenty

she was full-breasted and luxuriously formed. Her face was still like a soft rich flesh, unchangeable. But her eyes, once liked, were wonderful. She was afraid of him. He would notice her new blouse.

His, being in a hard, ironical mood, was entertaining the family to a description of a service given in the Primitive Methodist Chapel, conducted by one of the well-known preachers of the sect. He sat at the head of the table, his outside face, with the eyes that could be so beautiful, shining with tenderness or dancing with laughter, now taking on one expression and then another, in imitation of various people he was mocking. His mockery always hurt her; it was too near the reality. He was too clever and cruel. She felt that when his eyes were like this, hard with mocking here, he would spare neither himself nor anybody else. But Mrs. Leivers was wiping her eyes with laughter, and Mr. Leivers, just awake from his Sunday nap, was rubbing his head in amazement. The three brothers sat with ruffled, sleepy appearance in their shirtsleeves, giving a guffaw from time to time. The whole family looked a "take-off" more than anything.

He took an notice of Miriam. Later, she saw him remark her new blouse, one that the artist approved, but it was from him not a spark of warmth. She was nervous, could hardly reach the tea-cups from the shelves.

When the men went out to talk, she ventured to address him personally.

"You were late," she said.

"Was I?" he answered.

There was silence for a while.

"Was it rough riding?" she asked.

"I didn't notice it."

She continued quickly to lay the table. When she had finished—

"You won't be for a few minutes. Will you come and look at the daffodils?" she said.

He rose without answering. They went out into the back garden under the budding daisy-mosses. The hills and the sky were clear and cold. Everything looked washed, rather hard. Miriam glanced at Paul. He was pale and inquisitive. It seemed cruel to her that his eyes and brows, which she loved, could look so haunting.

"Has the wind made you tired?" she asked. She detected an undermeanth feeling of weariness about him.

"No, I think not," he answered.

"It must be rough on the road—the wind means so."

"You can see by the clouds it's a south-west wind; that helps me here."

"You see, I don't cycle, so I don't understand," she murmured.
 "In these need to cycle to know that!" he said.

She thought his sarcasms were unnecessary. They went forward in silence. Beyond the wall, tawny leaves at the back of the house was a sham hedge, under which daffodils were crawling forward from among their sheaves of green-grown blades. The chords of the flowers were greenish with cold. But still some had burst, and their gold ruffled and glowed. Miriam went on her knees before one cluster, took a wild-looking daffodil between her hands, turned up its face of gold to her, and bowed down, caressing it with her mouth and cheeks and brow. He stood aside, with his hands in his pockets, watching her. One after another she turned up to him the face of the yellow, laughing flowers appealingly, fondling them lovingly all the while.

"Aren't they magnificent?" she murmured.

"Magnificent! It's a bit thick—they're pretty!"

She bowed again to her flowers at his censure of her praise. He watched her crooning, slipping the flowers with furtive blinks.

"Why must you always be fondling things?" he said irritably.

"But I love to touch them," she replied, hurt.

"Can you never like things without clutching them as if you wanted to pull the heart out of them? Why don't you have a bit more restraint, or reserve, or something?"

She looked up at him full of pain, then continued slowly to stroke her lips against a ruffled flower. Their scent, as she smelled it, was as much kinder than his. It almost made her cry.

"You wheedle the soul out of things," he said. "I would never wheedle—in any case, I'd go straight."

He scarcely knew what he was saying. Those things came from him mechanically. She looked at him. His body seemed one weapon, firm and hard against her.

"You're always begging things to love you," he said, "as if you were a beggar for love. Even the flowers, you have to flatter on them——"

Rhythmically, Miriam was teasing and stroking the flower with her mouth, inhaling the scent which over and over made her shudder as it came to her nostrils.

"You don't want to love—your eternal and abnormal craving is to be loved. You aren't positive, you're negative. You absturb, absturb, as if you want fill yourself up with love, because you've got a shortage somewhere."

She was stunned by his cruelty, and did not hear. He had not the faintest notion of what he was saying. It was as if his forced, tortured soul, run hot by thwarted passion, jerked off these sayings

like sparks from electricity. She did not grasp anything he said, she only sat crouched beneath his cruelty and his hatred of her. She never realized in a flash. Over everything she brooded and brooded.

After tea he stayed with Edgar and the brothers, taking no notice of Miriam. She, extremely unhappy on this looked-for holiday, waited for him. And at last he yielded and came to her. She was determined to track this mood of his to its origin. She wanted it not much more than a reward.

"Shall we go through the wood a little way?" she asked him, knowing he never refused a direct request.

They went down to the warren. On the middle path they passed a trap, a narrow horizontal ledge of small fir-branches, baited with the paws of a rabbit. Paul glanced at it frowning. She caught his eye.

"Isn't it dreadful?" she asked.

"I don't know! Is it worse than a wheel with its teeth in a rabbit's throat? One wheel on many rabbits? One on the other must go!"

He was taking the bitterness of life badly. She was rather sorry for him.

"We will go back to the house," he said. "I don't want to walk out."

They went past the lilac-tree, whose leaves had buds were making unfurled. Just a fragment remained of the hayrack, a monument squared and brown, like a pillar of stone. There was a little bed of hay from the last cutting.

"Let us sit here a minute," said Miriam.

He sat down against his will, resting his back against the hard wall of hay. They faced the amphitheatre of round hills that gleamed with sunset, they whirled forest standing out, the meadows golden, the woods dark and yet luminous, tree-tops folded over one-tops, distant in the distance. The evening had cleared, and the sun was under with a sanguine flash under which the land lay still and rich.

"Isn't it beautiful?" she pleaded.

But he only scowled. He would rather have had it ugly just then.

At that moment a big bull-terrier came rushing up, open-mouthed, pranced his two paws on the youth's shoulders, licking his face. Paul drew back, laughing. Ed was a great cat to him. He pushed the dog aside, but it came leaping back.

"Get out," said the lad, "or I'll shut thee out."

But the dog was not to be pushed away. So Paul had a little

battle with the creature, pitching poor Bill away from him, who, however, only floundered momentarily back again, wild with joy. The two fought together, the man laughing grudgingly, the dog growling all over. Miriam watched them. There was something pathetic about the man. He wanted so badly to love, to be tender. The rough way he handled the dog even was really loving. Bill got up, jumping with happiness, his brown eyes rolling in his white face, and lumbered back again. He adored Fred. The lad frowned.

"Bill, I've had enough of thee," he said.

But the dog only stood with two heavy paws, that quivered with love, upon his thigh, and flickered a red tongue at him. He drew back.

"No," he said—"no—I've had enough."

And in a minute the dog trotted off happily, to vary the fun.

He remained staring miserably across at the hills, whose still beauty he begrudged. He wanted to go and cycle with Edgar. Yet he had not the courage to leave Miriam.

"Why are you sad?" she asked humbly.

"I'm not sad, why should I be," he answered. "I'm only unusual."

She wondered why he always claimed to be normal when he was disagreeable.

"But what is the matter?" she pleaded, reading him something.

"Nothing!"

"Nay!" she murmured.

He picked up a stick and began to stab the earth with it.

"You'd far better not talk," he said.

"But I wish to know——" she replied.

He laughed resentfully.

"You always do," he said.

"It's not fair to me," she murmured.

He thrust, thrust, thrust at the ground with the polished stick, digging up little clods of earth as if he were in a fever of imitation. She gently and firmly laid her hand on his wrist.

"Don't!" she said. "Put it away."

He flung the stick into the currant-bushes, and leaned back. Now he was bored up.

"What is it?" she pleaded softly.

His lay perfectly still, only his eyes alive, and they full of torment.

"You know," he said at length, rather wearily—"you know—we'd better break off."

It was what she decided. Softly everything seemed to darken before her eyes.

"Why?" she murmured. "What has happened?"

"Nothing has happened. We only realize where we are. It's no good——"

She waited in silence, sickly, painfully. It was no good being impudent with him. At any rate, he would tell her now what ailed him.

"We agreed on friendship," he went on in a dull, monotonous voice. "How often have we agreed for friendship? And yet—it neither keeps there, nor goes anywhere else."

He was silent again. She hesitated. What did he mean? He was so worrying. There was something he would not yield. Yet she must be patient with him.

"I can only give friendship—it's all I'm capable of—it's a flaw in my make-up. The thing overbalances to one side—I have a toppling balance. Let us have done."

There was warmth of fury in his last phrase. He meant she loved him more than he her. Perhaps he could not love her. Perhaps she had not in herself that which he wanted. It was the deepest motive of her soul, this self-sensitiveness. It was so deep she dared neither realize nor acknowledge it. Perhaps she was deficient. Like an infinitely subtle charm, it kept her always back. If it were so, she would do without him. She would never let herself want him. She would recede, recede.

"But what has happened?" she said.

"Nothing—it's all in myself—it only comes out just now. We're always like this towards Katerina-Jane."

He grovelled so helplessly, she pitied him. At least she never flattered in such a pitiable way. After all, it was he who was chiefly humiliated.

"What do you want?" she asked him.

"Why—I mustn't come often—that's all. Why should I monopolize you when I'm not—— You see, I'm deficient in something with regard to you——"

He was telling her he did not love her, and so ought to leave her a chance with another man. How foolish and blind and shamefully clumsy he was! What were other men to her? What were men to her at all? But he, oh! she loved his soul. Was he deficient in something? Perhaps he was.

"But I don't understand," she said huskily. "Yesterday——"

The night was turning jangled and haphazard to him as the twilight faded. And she bowed under her suffering.

"I know," he cried, "you never will! You'll never believe that I can't—can't physically, any more than I can fly up like a sky-lark——"

"What?" she murmured. Now she dreaded.

"Lost you."

He hated her himself at that moment because he made her suffer. Love her! She knew he loved her. He really belonged to her. This alone not loving her, physically, bodily, was a mere personality on his part, because he knew she loved him. He was stupid like a child. He belonged to her. His soul wanted her. She guessed somebody had been influencing him. She felt upon him the handmaiden, the foreignness of another influence.

"What have they been saying at home?" she asked.

"It's not that," he answered.

And then she knew it was. She despised them for their commonness, his people. They did not know what things were really worth.

He and she talked very little more that night. After all he left her to cycle with Edgar.

He had come back to his mother. Here was the strongest tie in his life. When he thought round, Miriam almost awoke. There was a vague, unreal feel about her. And nobody else mattered. There was one place in the world that stood solid and did not melt into greyvelly: the place where his mother was. Everybody else could grow shadowy, almost non-existent to him, but she could not. It was as if the pivot and pole of his life, from which he could not escape, was his mother.

And in the same way she waited for him. In him was established her life now. After all, the life beyond offered very little to Mrs. Morel. She saw that our chance for doing it here, and doing wanted with her. Paul was going to prove that she had been right; he was going to make a man whose nothing should shift off his feet; he was going to alter the face of the earth in some way which mattered. Wherever he went she felt her soul went with him. Whenever he did she felt her soul stood by him, ready, as it were, to hand him his soul. She could not bear it when he was with Miriam. William was dead. She would fight to keep Paul.

And he came back to her. And in his soul was a feeling of the satisfaction of self-sacrifice because he was faithful to her. She loved him first; he loved her first. And yet it was not enough. His new young life, so strong and imperious, was urged towards something else. It made him mad with hardness. She saw this, and wished bitterly that Miriam had been a woman who could take this new life of his, and leave her the roots. He fought against his mother almost as he fought against Miriam.

It was a week before he went again to Willey Farm. Miriam had suffered a great deal, and was afraid to see him again. Was she now to endure the ignominy of his abandoning her? Thus

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would only be superficial and temporary. He would come back, she told the boys to his soul. But meanwhile, how he would torture her with his battle against her. She struck down to.

However, the Sunday after Easter he came to tea. Mrs. Leeson was glad to see him. She gathered something was troubling him, that he found things hard. He seemed so dear to her for comfort. And she was good to him. She did him that great kindness of treating him almost with reverence.

He met her with the young children in the front garden.

"I'm glad you've come," said she smiling, looking at him with her great appealing brown eyes. "It is such a sunny day. I was just going down the fields for the first time this year."

He felt she would like him to come. That comforted him. They were, talking simply, he gentle and humble. He could have wept with gratitude that she was delicious to him. He was feeling humiliated.

At the bottom of the New Close they found a thrush's nest.

"Shall I show you the eggs?" he said.

"But!" replied Mrs. Leeson. "They seem such a sign of spring, and so hopeful."

He put aside the thorns, and took out the eggs, holding them in the palm of his hand.

"They are quite hot—I think we frightened her off them," he said.

"Ah, poor thing!" said Mrs. Leeson.

Miriam could not help touching the eggs, and his hand which, it seemed to her, cradled them so well.

"Isn't it a strange warmth?" she murmured, to get near him.

"Blood heat," he answered.

She watched him putting them back, his body pressed against the hedge, his arms reaching slowly through the thorns, his hand folded carefully over the eggs. He was concentrated on the act. Seeing him so, she loved him; he seemed so simple and sufficient to himself. And she could not get to him.

After tea she stood hesitating at the backwash. He took Tartan & Tawney. Again they sat on the bank of Ivy at the foot of the rack. He read a couple of papers, but without any heart for it. Again the dog came racing up to repeat the fun of the other day. He showed his mouth in the man's chest. Paul fingered his ear for a moment. Then he pushed him away.

"Go away, Bill," he said. "I don't want you."

Bill slunk off, and Miriam wondered and dreaded what was coming. There was a silence about the youth that made her ill

with apprehension. It was not his *Surin*, but his quiet resolution that she feared.

Turning his face a little to one side, so that she could not see him, he began, speaking slowly and painfully:

"Do you think—if I didn't come up so much—you might get up like somebody else—another man?"

So this was what he was still harping on.

"But I don't know any other man. Why do you ask?" she replied, in a low tone that should have been a reproach to him.

"Why," he blurted, "because they say I've no right to come up like this—without we mean to marry——"

Miriam was indignant at anybody's meddling the least between them. She had been furious with her own father for suggesting to Paul, laughingly, that he knew why he came so much.

"Who says?" she asked, wondering if her people had anything to do with it. They had not.

"Mother—and the others. They say at this rate everybody will consider me engaged, and I ought to consider myself so, because it's not fair to you. And I've tried to find out—and I don't think I love you as a man ought to love his wife. What do you think about it?"

Miriam bowed her head meekly. She was angry at having this struggle. People should leave him and her alone.

"I don't know," she murmured.

"Do you think we love each other enough to marry?" he asked definitely. It made her tremble.

"No," she answered truthfully. "I don't think so—we're too young."

"I thought perhaps," he went on miserably, "that you, with your intensity in things, might have given me more—than I could ever make up to you. And even now—if you think it better—we'll be engaged."

Now Miriam wanted to cry. And she was angry too. He was showing such a child for people to do as they liked with.

"No, I don't think so," she said firmly.

He pondered a minute.

"You see," he said, "with me—I don't think one person would ever monopolise me—the everything to me—I think never."

This she did not consider.

"No," she murmured. Then, after a pause, she looked at him, and her dark eyes flashed.

"This is your mother," she said. "I know she never liked me."

"No, no, it isn't," he said hastily. "It was the year since she spoke this time. She only said, if I was going on, I ought to con-

side myself engaged." There was a silence. "And if I ask you to come down any time, you won't stop away, will you?"

She did not answer. By this time she was very angry.

"Well, what shall we do?" she said shortly. "I suppose I'd better drop French. I was just beginning to get on with it. But I suppose I can go on alone."

"I don't see that we need," he said. "I can give you a French lesson, surely."

"Well—and these are Sunday nights. I don't stop coming to chapel, because I enjoy it, and it's all the social life I get. But you've no need to come home with me. I can go alone."

"All right," he answered, rather taken aback. "But if I ask Edgar, he'll always come with us, and then they can say nothing."

There was silence. After all, then, she would not lose much. For all their talk down at his house there would not be much difference. She wished they would mind their own business.

"And you won't think about it, and let it trouble you, will you?" he asked.

"Oh no," replied Miriam, without looking at him.

He was alone. She thought him unstable. He had no fairy of purpose, no anchor of righteousness that held him.

"Because," he continued, "a man goes across his bicycle—and goes to work—and does all sorts of things. But a woman broods."

"No, I don't brood," said Miriam. And she meant it.

It had gone rather chilly. They went indoors.

"How white Paul looks!" Mrs. Levens exclaimed. "Miriam, you shouldn't have let him sit out of doors. Do you think you've taken cold, Paul?"

"Oh, no!" he laughed.

But he felt done up. It went him out, the conflict in himself. Miriam pined him now. But quite easily, before nine o'clock, he was to go.

"You're not going home, are you?" asked Mrs. Levens anxiously.

"Yes," he replied. "I said I'd be early." He was very awkward.

"But this is early," said Mr. Levens.

Miriam sat in the rocking-chair, and did not speak. He hovered, expecting her to rise and go with him to the barn as usual for his bicycle. She remained as she was. He was at a loss.

"Well—good-night all!" he hurried.

She spoke her good-night along with all the others. But as he went past the window he looked in. She saw him pale, his brow knit slightly in a way that had become constant with him, his eyes dark with pain.

She rose and went to the doorway to wave good-bye to him as he passed through the gate. He rode slowly under the pine-trees, feeling a car and a miserable wreck. His hands were flung down the hills at random. He thought it would be a relief to break one's neck.

Two days later he sent her up a book and a little note, urging her to read and be busy.

At this time he gave all his friendship to Edgar. He loved the family so much, he loved the farm so much; it was the dearest place on earth to him. His home was not so lovable. It was his studies. But then he would have been just as happy with his mother anywhere. Whose Willey Farm he loved passionately. He loved the little policy kitchen, where men's boots were placed, and the dog slept with one eye open for fear of being trodden on; where the lamp hung over the table at night, and everything was so dim. He loved Miriam's long low parlour, with its atmosphere of romance, its flowers, its books, its high rosewood piano. He loved the garden and the buildings that stood with their scarlet roofs on the raised edges of the fields, crept towards the wood as if for comfort, the wild country sweeping down a valley and up the grassy hills of the other side. Only to be there was an exhilaration and a joy to him. He loved Mrs. Leivers, with her unconscious and her quiet cynicism; he loved Mr. Leivers, so warm and young and lovable; he loved Edgar, who is up when he came, and the boys and the children and Bill—even the new Cooch and the Indian game-cock called Tippeco. All this beside Miriam. He could not give it up.

So he went as often, but he was usually with Edgar. Only all the family, including the father, joined in choruses and games at evening. And later, Miriam drew them together, and they read *Mabel* out of penny books, taking parts. It was great excitement. Miriam was glad, and Mrs. Leivers was glad, and Mr. Leivers enjoyed it. Then they all learned songs together from music and so, singing in a circle round the fire. But now Paul was very rarely alone with Miriam. She valued. When she and Edgar and he walked home together from chapel or from the library society in Buxton, she knew his talk, so passionate and so unorthodox nowadays, was for her. She did envy Edgar, however, his cycling with Paul, his Friday nights, his days working in the fields. For her Friday nights and her French lessons were gone. She was nearly always alone, walking, pondering in the wood, reading, studying, dreaming, waiting. And he wrote to her frequently.

One Sunday evening they awoke to their old race harmony. Edgar had stayed to Communion—he wondered what it was like

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—with Mrs. Morel. So Paul came on alone with Miriam to his home. He was never so far under her spell again. As usual, they were discussing the sermon. He was setting more sail and towards Agnosticism, but such a religious Agnosticism that Miriam did not suffer so badly. They went at the Roman "Via de Jesus" again. Miriam was the threshing-floor on which he threshed out all his beliefs. While he trampled his ideas upon her soul, the truth came out for him. She alone was his threshing-floor. She alone helped him towards realization. Always impulsive, she submitted to his argument and expounding. And somehow, because of her, he gradually realized where he was wrong. And what he realized, she realized. She felt he could not do without her.

They came to the silent home. He took the key out of the scullery window, and they entered. All the time he went on with his discussion. He lit the gas, mended the fire, and brought her some cake from the pantry. She sat on the sofa, quietly, with a glass on her knee. She wore a large white hat with some pinkish flowers. It was a cheap hat, but he liked it. Her face beneath was still and passive, golden-brown and reddish. Always her eyes were hid in her short curls. She watched him.

She liked him on Sundays. Then he wore a dark suit that showed the like movement of his body. There was a clean, sleepless look about him. He went on with his thinking to her. Suddenly he reached for a Bible. Miriam liked the way he reached up—so sharp, straight to the mark. He turned the pages quickly, and read her a chapter of St. John. As he sat in the armchair reading, inward, his voice only thinking, she felt as if he were using her unconsciously as a man uses his tools as some work he is bent on. She loved it. And the wisdom of his voice was like a reaching to something, and it was as if she were what he reached with. She sat back on the sofa away from him, and yet feeling herself the very instrument his hand grasped. It gave her great pleasure.

Then he began to falter and to get self-conscious. And when he came to the verse, "A woman, when she is so married, hath sovereignty because her hour is come," he raised it out. Miriam had felt him growing uncomfortable. She struck when the well-known word did not follow. He went on reading, but she did not hear. A grief and shame made her bend her head. Six months ago he would have read it simply. Now there was a scratch in his running with her. Now she felt there was really something hostile between them, something of which they were ashamed.

She ate her cake mechanically. He tried to go on with his argument, but could not get back the right note. Soon Edgar came

in. Mrs. Morel had gone to her friends'. The three set off to Willey Farm.

Miriam brooded over his split with her. There was something she wanted. He could not be satisfied; he could give her no peace. There was between them now always a ground for strife. She wanted to prove him. She believed that his chief need in life was herself. If she could prove it, both to herself and to him, the rest might go; she could simply trust to the future.

So in May she asked him to come to Willey Farm and meet Mrs. Dawson. There was something he had never seen. She saw him, wherever they spoke of Clara Dawson, come and get slightly angry. He said he did not like her. Yet he was keen to know about her. Well, he should put himself in the test. She believed that there was in him desire for higher things, and desire for lower, and that the desire for the higher would conquer. At any rate, he should try. She forgot that her "higher" and "lower" were arbitrary.

He was rather excited at the idea of meeting Clara at Willey Farm. Mrs. Dawson came for the day. Her heavy, sun-coloured hair was coiled on top of her head. She wore a white blouse and navy skirt, and somewhere, wherever she was, seemed to make things look pretty and insignificant. When she was in the room, the kitchen seemed too small and mean altogether. Miriam's beautiful twilight parties looked stiff and stupid. All the Lovers were striped like candles. They found her rather hard to get up with. Yet she was perfectly amiable, but indifferent, and rather hard.

Paul did not come till afternoon. He was early. As he swung off his bicycle, Miriam saw him look round at the house eagerly. He would be disappointed if the visitor had not come. Miriam went out to meet him, knowing her hand because of the syrenish Nardians were coming out crimson under the cool green shadow of their leaves. The girl stood, dark-haired, glad to see him.

"Haven't Clara come?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Miriam in her musical tone. "She's reading."

He wheeled his bicycle into the barn. He had put on a handsome tie, of which he was rather proud, and such to match.

"She came this morning?" he asked.

"Yes," replied Miriam, as she walked at his side. "You said you'd bring me that letter from the man at Liberty's. Have you remembered?"

"Oh dear, no!" he said. "But nag at me till you get it."

"I don't like to nag at you."

"Be it whether or not. And is she *not* more agreeable?" he continued.

"You know I always think she is quite agreeable."

He was silent. Evidently his argument to be early to-day had been for naught. Miriam already began to suffer. They were together towards the house. He took the keys off his trousers, but was too lazy to break the door from his sleep, in spite of the rocks and tin.

Clara sat in the coal parlor reading. He saw the shape of her white neck, and the hair half filled from it. She rose, looking at him indifferently. To shake hands she lifted her arm straight, in a manner that seemed at once to keep him at a distance, and yet to bring something to him. He noticed how her breast swelled inside her blouse, and how her shoulders curved handsomely under the thin muslin at the top of her arm.

"You have changed a great deal," he said.

"It happens so," she said.

"Yes," he said; "I am glad."

She sat down, yet thanking him for his profession.

"What have you been doing all morning?" asked Paul of Miriam.

"Well, you see," said Miriam, coughing heavily, "Clara only came with father—and so—she's not been here very long."

Clara sat leaning to the table, holding blood. He noticed her hands were large, but well kept. And the skin on them seemed almost warm, opaque, and white, with that golden hair. She did not mind if he observed her hands. She intended to marry him. Her heavy arm lay negligently on the table. Her mouth was closed as if she were offended, and she kept her face slightly averted.

"You went at Margaret Bonford's meeting the other evening," he said to her.

Miriam did not know this outrageous Paul. Clara glanced at him.

"Yes," she said.

"Why," asked Miriam, "how do you know?"

"I went in for a few minutes before the trials came," he answered.

Clara turned away rather disdainfully.

"I think she's a lovely little woman," said Paul.

"Margaret Bonford?" exclaimed Clara. "She's a great deal cleverer than most men."

"Well, I didn't say she was'n," he said, depreciating. "She's lovely for all that."

"And, of course, that's all that matters," said Clara witheringly.

He rubbed his head, rather perplexed, rather annoyed.

"I suppose it matters more than her cleavage," he said; "which, after all, would never get her to heaven."

"It's not heaven she wants to get—it's her fair share on earth," answered Clara. She spoke as if he were responsible for some deprivation which Miss Redford suffered.

"Well," he said, "I thought she was warm, and awfully nice—only too brief. I wished she was sitting comfortably in peace——"

"During her husband's unclings," said Clara mockingly.

"I'm sure she wouldn't mind during even my clings," he said. "And I'm sure she'd do them well. Just as I wouldn't mind blacking her boots if she wanted me to."

But Clara refused to answer this sally of his. He talked to Miriam for a little while. The other woman held aloof.

"Well," he said, "I think I'll go and see Edgar. Is he on the land?"

"I believe," said Miriam, "he's gone for a load of coal. He should be back directly."

"Then," he said, "I'll go and meet him."

Miriam dared not propose anything for the three of them. He rose and left them.

On the top road, where the game was out, he saw Edgar walking lazily beside the mare, who nudged her white-starred forehead as she dragged the clinking load of coal. The young farmer's face lighted up as he saw his friend. Edgar was good-looking, with dark, warm eyes. His clothes were old and rather shabby, and he walked with considerable pride.

"Hello!" he said, seeing Paul hardheaded. "Where are you going?"

"Gone to meet you. Can't stand 'Neversons'."

Edgar's teeth flashed in a laugh of amusement.

"Who is 'Neverson'?" he asked.

"The lady—Mrs. Dawes—it ought to be Mrs. The Ravens that quarrel 'Neversons'."

Edgar laughed with glee.

"Don't you like her?" he asked.

"Not a bit lot," said Paul. "Why, do you?"

"Not." The answer came with a deep ring of conviction.

"Not." Edgar pursed up his lips. "I can't say she's much to my like." He smiled a little. Then: "But why do you call her 'Neversons'?" he asked.

"Well," said Paul, "if she looks at a man she says laughingly 'Neversons,' and if she looks at herself in the looking-glass she says disdainfully 'Neversons,' and if she thinks back she says it in disgust, and if she looks forward she says it cynically."

Edgar considered this speech, failed to make much out of it, and said, laughing:

"You think she's a matchmaker?"

"She thinks she is," replied Paul.

"But you don't think so?"

"No," replied Paul.

"Wasn't she nice with you, then?"

"Could you imagine her nice with anybody?" asked the young man.

Edgar laughed. Together they unloaded the coal in the yard. Paul was rather self-conscious, because he knew Clara could see if she looked out of the window. She didn't look.

On Saturday afternoon the horses were brushed down and groomed. Paul and Edgar worked together, mending with the dyes that came from the pails of Jimmy and Fiver.

"Do you know a new song to teach me?" said Edgar.

He continued to work all the time. The back of his neck was sun-red when he bent down, and his fingers that held the brush were thick. Paul watched him sometimes.

"Mary Morrison?" suggested the younger.

Edgar agreed. He had a good nasal voice, and he loved to learn all the songs his friend could teach him, so that he could sing while he was caring. Paul had a very indifferent baritone voice, but a good ear. However, he sang softly, for fear of Clara. Edgar repeated the line in a clear tenor. At times they both broke off to sneeze, and first one, then the other, showed his teeth.

Miriam was impatient of men. It took so little to amuse them—even Paul. She thought it unbecoming in him that he could be so thoroughly absorbed in a triviale.

It was tedious when they had finished.

"What song was that?" asked Miriam.

Edgar told her. The conversation turned to singing.

"We have such jolly times," Miriam said to Clara.

Mrs. Dawson ate her meal in a slow, dignified way. Whenever the men were present she grew distant.

"Do you like singing?" Miriam asked her.

"If it is good," she said.

Paul, of course, coloured.

"You mean if it is high-class and trained?" he said.

"I think a voice needs training before the singing is anything," she said.

"You might as well insist on having people's voices trained before you allowed them to talk," he replied. "Really, people sing for their own pleasure, as a rule."

"And it may be for other people's discomfort."

"Then the other people should have flaps to their ears," he replied.

The boys laughed. There was a silence. He flushed deeply, and sat in silence.

After tea, when all the men had gone but Paul, Mrs. Lovers said to Clara:

"And you find life happier now?"

"Indisputably."

"And you are satisfied?"

"So long as I can be free and independent."

"And you don't taste anything in your life?" asked Mrs. Lovers gaily.

"I've got all that behind me."

Paul had been feeling uncomfortable during this discourse. He got up.

"You'll find you're always tambling over the things you've put behind you," he said. Then he took his departure to the cowshed. He felt he had been wise, and his ready pride was high. He whistled as he went down the back track.

Miriam came for him a little later to know if he would go with Clara and her for a walk. They set off down to Snelley Hill Farm. As they were going beside the brook, on the Wilby Water side, looking through the brake at the edge of the wood, where plait campions glowed under a few ashbuds, they saw, beyond the ash-trunks and the thin bare bushes, a man loading a great hay home through the gullies. The big red beam seemed to dance continuously through that discolor of green bare dirt, away there where the air was shadowy, as if it were in the past, among the falling bluebells that might have blossomed for Desire or Jack.

The three stood charmed.

"What a man to be a knight," he said, "and to have a passion like."

"And to have us shut up safely?" replied Clara.

"Yes," he answered, "dying with your hands at your bosoms. I would carry your banner of white and green and bell-tops. I would have 'W.S.P.U.' emblazoned on my shield, beneath a weapon rampant."

"I have no doubts," said Clara, "that you would much rather fight for a woman than let her fight for herself."

"I would. When she fights for herself she seems like a dog before a looking-glass, goes into a mad fury with its own shadow."

"And you are the looking-glass?" she asked, with a curl of the lip.

"Or the shadow," he replied.

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"I am afraid," she said, "that you are too clever."

"Well, I leave it to you to be good," he returned, laughing. "Be good, sweet maid, and just let me be clever."

But Clara worried of his flippancy. Suddenly, looking at her, he saw that the upward lifting of her face was misery and not merriment. His heart grew tender for everybody. He turned and was gentle with Miriam, whom he had neglected till then.

At the wood's edge they met Limb, a thin, swarthy man of forty, tenant of Steeley Mill, which he ran as a cattle-raising farm. He held the halter of the powerful stallion indifferently, as if he were tired. The three stood to let him pass over the stepping-stones of the first brook. Paul admired that so large an animal should walk on such springy toes, with an undisturbed accent of vigour. Limb pulled up before them.

"Tell your father, Miss Leirvan," he said, in a peculiar piping voice, "that his young hen's 'as broke that bottom fence three days an' rain's."

"Which?" asked Miriam, nervous.

The great horse stretched heavily, shifting round in red flanks, and looking suspiciously with its wonderful big eyes upwards from under its lowered head and falling mane.

"Come along a bit," replied Limb, "an' I'll show you."

The man and the stallion went forward. It drenched sideways, shading its white forelocks and looking frightened, as it felt itself in the track.

"No hen's-parade!" said the man affectionately to the beast.

It went up the bank in little leaps, then splashed freely through the second brook. Clara, walking with a kind of sultry attention, watched it half-blackened, half-conspicuous. Limb stopped and pointed to the fence under some willows.

"There, you see where they got through," he said. "My man's drove 'em back three times."

"Yes," answered Miriam, colouring as if she were at fault.

"Are you coming in?" asked the man.

"No thanks; but we should like to go by the pond."

"Well, just as you're a mind," he said.

The horse gave little whinnies of pleasure at being so near home.

"He is glad to be back," said Clara, who was interested in the creature.

"Yes—it's been a tidy step today."

They went through the gate, and saw approaching them from the big farmhouse a smallish, dark, middle-aged woman of about thirty-five. Her hair was touched with grey, her dark eyes looked wild. She walked with her hands behind her back. Her

brother went forward. As it saw her, the big bay stallion whinnyed again. She came up excitedly.

"Are you home again, my boy?" she said tenderly to the horse, not to the man. The great beast shifted round to her, ducking his head. She struggled into his mouth the wrinkled yellow apple she had been hiding behind her back, then she kissed him near the eye. He gave a big sigh of pleasure. She held his head in her arms against her breast.

"Isn't he splendid!" said Miriam to her.

Miss Linds looked up. Her dark eyes glanced straight at Paul.

"Oh, good-evening, Miss Lovers," she said. "It's ages since you've been down."

Miriam introduced her friends.

"Your horse is a fine fellow!" said Clara.

"Isn't he?" Again she kissed him. "As loving as any man!"

"More loving than most men, I should think," replied Clara.

"He's a nice boy!" cried the woman, again embracing the horse.

Clara, fascinated by the big beast, went up to stroke his neck.

"He's quite gentle," said Miss Linds. "Don't you think big fellows are?"

"He's a beauty!" replied Clara.

She wanted to look in his eyes. She wanted him to look at her.

"It's a pity he can't talk," she replied.

"Oh, but he can—all but," replied the other woman.

Then her brother moved on with the horse.

"Are you coming in? Do come in, Mr.—I didn't catch it."

"Miriam," said Miriam. "No, we won't come in, but we should like to go by the mill-pond."

"Yes—yes, do. Do you fish, Mr. Miriam?"

"No," said Paul.

"Because if you do you might come and fish any time," said Miss Linds. "We scarcely see a soul from week-end to week-end and I should be thankful."

"What fish are there in the pond?" he asked.

They went through the front garden, over the shade, and up the steep bank to the pond, which lay in shadow, with its open wooded sides. Paul walked with Miss Linds.

"I shouldn't mind swimming here," he said.

"Do," she replied. "Come when you like. My brother will be awfully pleased to talk with you. He is so quiet, because there is no one to talk to. Do come and swim."

Clara went up.

"It's a fine depth," she said, "and so clean."

"Yes," said Miss Limb.

"Do you mean?" said Paul. "Miss Limb was just saying we could come when we liked."

"Of course there's the farm-house," said Miss Limb.

They talked a few moments, then went on up the wild hill, leaving the kindly, haggard-eyed woman on the bank.

The hillside was all ripe with marsh-mallows. It was wild and overgrown, given over to rabbits. The three walked in silence. Then:

"She makes me feel uncomfortable," said Paul.

"You mean Miss Limb?" asked Miriam. "Yes."

"What's a matter with her? Is she going dotty with being too lonely?"

"Yes," said Miriam. "It's not the right sort of life for her. I think it's cruel to bury her there. I really ought to go and see her more. But—she upsets me."

"She makes me feel sorry for her—yes, and she bothers me," he said.

"I suppose," burst Clara suddenly, "she wants a man."

The other two were silent for a few moments.

"But it's the loneliness that's made her queer," said Paul.

Clara did not answer, but strode on uphill. She was walking with her head hanging, her legs relaxing as she kicked through the dead rhubarb and the tawny grass, her arms hanging loose. Battered that walking, her handsome body seemed to be blundering up the hill. A hat were worn over Paul. He was curious about her. Perhaps life had been cruel to her. He forgot Miriam, who was walking beside him talking to him. She glanced at him, finding he did not answer her. His eyes were fixed ahead on Clara.

"Do you still think she is disappointed?" she asked.

He did not notice that the question was sudden. It ran with his thoughts.

"Something's the matter with her," he said.

"Yes," answered Miriam.

They found at the top of the hill a hidden wild field, two sides of which were backed by the wood, the other sides by high loose hedges of hawthorn and elder-bushes. Between these overgrown bushes were gaps that the cattle might have walked through had there been any cattle now. There the turf was smooth as velvet, padded and holed by the rabbits. The field itself was coarse, and growed with tall, big cowslips that had never been cut. Clusters of strong flowers rose everywhere above the coarse mass of turf. It was like a meadow crowded with tall, fairy ships.

"Ah!" cried Miriam, and she looked at Paul, her dark eyes

dining. He smiled. Together they enjoyed the field of flowers. Clara, a little way off, was looking at the cowslips disconsolately. Paul and Miriam stayed close together, talking in subdued tones. He leered on one knee, quickly gathering the best blossoms, moving from side to side restlessly, talking volubly all the time. Miriam plucked the flowers lovingly, lingering over them. He always seemed to her too quick and almost scientific. Yet his bunches had a natural beauty more than hers. He loved them, but as if they were his and he had a right to them. She had more reverence for them: they held something she had not.

The flowers were very fresh and sweet. He wanted to drink them. As he gathered them, he saw the little yellow trumpets. Clara was still wandering about disconsolately. Going towards her, he said:

"Why don't you get some?"

"I don't believe in it. They look better growing."

"But you'd like some?"

"They want to be left."

"I don't believe they do."

"I don't want the company of flowers about me," she said.

"That's a stiff, artificial notion," he said. "They don't die any quicker in water than on their roots. And besides, they look nice in a bowl—they look jolly. And you only call a thing a corpse because it looks corpse-like."

"Whether it is one or not?" she argued.

"It isn't one to me. A dead flower isn't a corpse of a flower."

Clara now ignored him.

"And even so—what right have you to pick them?" she asked.

"Because I like them, and want them—and there's plenty of them."

"And that is sufficient?"

"Yes. Why not? I'm sure they'd smell nice in your room in Nottingham."

"And I should have the pleasure of watching them die."

"But then—it does not matter if they do die."

Whereupon he left her, and went stooping over the clumps of tangled flowers which thickly sprinkled the field like pale, luminous steam-cloths. Miriam had come close. Clara was kneeling, breathing some scent from the cowslips.

"I think," said Miriam, "if you treat them with reverence you don't do them any harm. It is the spirit you pluck them in that matters."

"Yes," he said. "But no, you get 'em because you want 'em, and that's all." He held out his bunch.

Miriam was silent. He picked some more.

"Look at these!" he continued; "marly and hairy like little men and like boys with fat legs."

Clara's hat lay on the grass not far off. She was kneeling, bending forward still to smell the flowers. Her neck gave him a sharp pang, such a beautiful thing, yet not proud of itself just now. Her bosom swung slightly in her blouse. The arching curve of her back was beautiful and strong; she wore no stays. Suddenly, without knowing, he was scattering a handful of cowslips over her hair and neck, saying:

"Aster to thee: and daisy to thee,
If the Lord won't have you the devil must."

The daisy flowers fell on her neck. She looked up at him, with almost painful, scared gray eyes, wondering what he was doing. Flowers fell on her face, and she shut her eyes.

Suddenly, standing there above her, he felt awkward.

"I thought you wanted a favor!" he said, ill at ease.

Clara laughed strangely, and rose, picking the cowslips from her hair. She took up her hat and placed it on. One flower had remained tangled in her hair. He saw, but would not tell her. He gathered up the flowers he had sprinkled over her.

At the edge of the wood the bluebells had flowed over into the field and stood there like flood-water. But they were fading now. Clara strayed up to them. He wandered after her. The bluebells pleased him.

"Look how they've come out of the wood!" he said.

Then she turned with a flash of warmth and of gratitude.

"Yes," she smiled.

His blood beat up.

"It makes me think of the wild men of the woods, how terrified they would be when they got breast to breast with the open space."

"Do you think they were?" she asked.

"I wonder which was more frightened among old tribes—those hurrying out of their darkness of woods upon all the space of light, or those from the open dipping into the forests."

"I should think the second," she answered.

"Yes, you do feel like one of the open spaces met, trying to force yourself into the dark, don't you?"

"How should I know?" she answered quietly.

The conversation ended there.

The evening was deepening over the earth. Already the valley was full of shadow. One tiny square of light stood opposite at

Greenhills Bank Farm. Brightness was returning on the tops of the hills. Miriam came up slowly, her face in her big, loose bunch of flowers, walking side-deep through the scarred flesh of creechips. Beyond her the trees were quaking into shape, all shadows.

"Shall we go?" she asked.

And the three turned away. They were all silent. Going down the path they could see the light of home right across, and on the ridge of the hill a thin dark outline with little lights, where the millery village touched the sky.

"It has been nice, hasn't it?" he asked.

Miriam murmured again. Clara was silent.

"Don't you think so?" he persisted.

But she walked with her head up, and still did not answer. He could tell by the way she moved, as if she didn't care, that she suffered.

At this time Paul took his mother to Lincoln. She was bright and enthusiastic at once, but as he sat opposite her in the railway carriage, she seemed to look frail. He had a momentary sensation as if she were slipping away from him. Then he wanted to get hold of her, to flatter her, almost to chain her. He felt he must keep hold of her with his hand.

They drove near to the city. Both were at the window looking for the cathedral.

"There she is, mother!" he cried.

They saw the great cathedral lying constant above the plain.

"Ah!" she exclaimed. "So she is!"

He looked at his mother. Her blue eyes were watching the cathedral quietly. She seemed again to be looking him. Something in the eternal repose of the uplified cathedral, blue and noble against the sky, was reflected in her, something of the eternity. What was, was. With all his young will he could not alter it. He saw her face, the skin still fresh and pink and dewy, but grey-flecked over her eyes, her eyelids steady, sinking a little, her mouth always closed with diffidence; and there was on her the same eternal look, as if she knew that at last. He knew again it with all the strength of his soul.

"Look, mother, how big she is above the town! Think, there are streets and means below her! She looks bigger than the city altogether."

"So she does!" exclaimed his mother, breaking bright into life again. But he had seen her dying, looking steady out of the window at the cathedral, her face and eyes fixed, reflecting the remoteness of life. And the momentary near her eyes, and her mouth shut so hard, made him feel he would go mad.

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They sat a meal that she considered wildly extravagant.

"Don't imagine I like it," she said, as she ate her coffee. "I don't like it, I really don't! Just think of your money wasted!"

"You never mind my money," he said. "You forget I'm a fellow taking his girl for an outing."

And he bought her some blue violets.

"Stop it at once, Sir!" she commanded. "How can I do it?"

"You've got nothing to do. Stand still!"

And in the middle of High Street he stuck the flowers in her coat.

"An old thing like that!" she said, sniffling.

"You see," he said, "I want people to think we're useful people. So look busy!"

"I'll jowl your head," she laughed.

"Sure!" he commanded. "Be a female piggon."

It took him an hour to get her through the street. She stood above Glory Hole, she stood before Green Lane, she stood everywhere, and exclaimed:

A man comes up, took off his hat, and bowed to her.

"Can I show you the town, madam?"

"No, thank you," she answered. "I've got my son."

Then Paul was cross with her for not answering with more dignity.

"You go away with you!" she exclaimed. "Hail there's the Jew's House. Now, you remember that lecture, Paul—?"

But she could scarcely climb the cathedral hill. She did not notice. Then suddenly he found her unable to speak. He took her into a little public-house, where she rested.

"It's nothing," she said. "My heart is only a bit silly, one must expect it."

He did not answer, but looked at her. Again his heart was cracked with a hot grip: He wanted to cry, he wanted to smash things in fury.

They set off again, pace by pace, so slowly. And every step seemed like a weight on his chest. He felt as if his heart would burst. At last they came to the top. She stood enchanted, looking at the castle gate, looking at the cathedral front. She had quite forgotten herself.

"Now this is better than I thought it could be!" she cried.

But he hated it. Everywhere he followed her, breathing. They sat together in the cathedral. They attended a little service in the choir. She was dumb.

"I suppose it is open to anybody?" she asked him.

"Yes," he replied. "Do you think they'd have the damned clock to send us away?"

"Well, I'm sure," she exclaimed, "they would if they heard your language."

Her face seemed to shine again with joy and peace during the service. And all the time he was waiting to rage and smash things and cry.

Afterwards, when they were leaning over the wall, looking at the town below, he blurted suddenly:

"Why can't a man have a young mother? What is she old for?"

"Well," his mother laughed, "she can certainly help it."

"And why wasn't I the eldest son? Look—they say the young ones have the advantage—but look, they had the young mother. You should have had me for your eldest son."

"I didn't arrange it," she remonstrated. "Come to consider, you're as much to blame as me."

He turned on her, white, his eyes furious.

"What are you old for?" he said, mad with his impotence.

"Why can't you walk? Why can't you come with me to places?"

"As one thing," she replied, "I could have run up that bill a good deal better than you."

"What's the good of that to me?" he cried, hitting his fist on the wall. Then he became placid. "It's too bad of you to be ill, little, it is—"

"Ill?" she cried. "I'm a bit old, and you'll have to put up with it, that's all."

They were quiet. But it was as much as they could bear. They got jolly again over tea. As they sat by Bayfield, watching the beach, he told her about Clara. His mother asked him innumerable questions.

"Then who does she live with?"

"With her mother, on Blackett Hill."

"And have they enough to keep them?"

"I don't think so. I think they do live weak."

"And where does her charm, my boy?"

"I don't know that she's charming, mother. But she's nice. And she seems straight, you know—not a bit deep, not a bit."

"But she's a good deal older than you?"

"She's thirty, I'm going of twenty-three."

"You haven't told me what you like her for."

"Because I don't know—a sort of definite way she's got—a sort of angry way."

Mrs. Mosel considered. She would have been glad now for her son to fall in love with some woman who would—she did not know what. But he forced so, got so furious suddenly, and again was melancholic. She wished he knew some nice woman—. She did

not know what she wished, but left it vague. At any rate she was not hostile to the idea of Clara.

Annie, too, was getting married. Leonard had gone away to work in Birmingham. One weekend when he was home she had said to him:

"You don't look very well, my lad."

"I don't," he said. "I feel anyone is taking me."

He called her "me" already in his boyish fashion.

"Are you sure they're good lodgings?" she asked.

"Yes—yes. Only—it's a wonder when you have to pour your own tea out—an' nobody to growse if you turn it in your stomach and say it is up. It somehow takes a' the taste out of it."

Mrs. Moor laughed.

"And as it knocks you up?" she said.

"I don't. I want to get married," he blurted, twining his fingers and looking down at his boots. There was a silence.

"But," she exclaimed, "I thought you said you'd wait another year."

"Yes, I did say so," he replied stubbornly.

Again she considered.

"And you know," she said, "Annie's a bit of a spendthrift. She's saved no more than eleven pounds. And I know, lad, you haven't had much chance."

He coloured up to the ears.

"I've got thirty-three quid," he said.

"It doesn't go far," she answered.

He said nothing, but twisted his fingers.

"And you know," she said, "I've nothing—"

"I don't want, ma!" he cried, very red, suffering and unconstraining.

"No, my lad, I know. I was only wishing I had. And take away five pounds for the wedding and things—in heaven's name—eleven pounds. You won't do much on that."

He roared with impatience, stubborn, not looking up.

"But do you really want to get married?" she asked. "Do you feel as if you might?"

He gave her one straight look from his blue eyes.

"Yes," he said.

"Then," she replied, "we must all do the best we can for it, lad."

The next time he looked up there were tears in his eyes.

"I don't want Annie to feel handicapped," he said struggling.

"My lad," she said, "you're ready—you've got a decent place. If a man had wanted me I'd have married him on his last week's

wages. She may find it a bit hard to start humbly. Young girls are like that. They look forward to the fine house they think they'll have. But I had expensive furniture. It's not everything."

So the wedding took place almost immediately. Arthur came home, and was splendid in uniform. Annie looked nice in a dove-grey dress that she could take for Sundays. Mabel called her a fool for getting married, and was cool with his servants. Mrs. Morel had white tips in her bonnet, and some white on her blouse, and was teased by both her sons for fancying herself so grand. Leonard was jolly and cordial, and felt a fearful fool. Paul could not quite see what Annie wanted to get married for. He was fond of her, and she of him. Still, he hoped rather lugubriously that it would turn out all right. Arthur was astonishingly handsome in his scarlet and yellow, and he knew it well, but was secretly ashamed of the uniform. Annie cried her eyes up in the kitchen, on leaving her mother. Mrs. Morel cried a little, then patted her on the back and said:

"But don't cry, child, he'll be good to you."

Mabel stamped and said she was a fool to go and tie herself up. Leonard looked white and overwrought. Mrs. Morel said to him:

"I'll trust her to you, my lad, and hold you responsible for her."

"You can," he said, sadly dead with the ordeal. And it was all over.

When Mabel and Arthur were in bed, Paul sat talking, as he often did, with his mother.

"You're not sorry she's married, mother, are you?" he asked.

"I'm not sorry she's married—but it seems strange that she should go from me. Heaven seems to me hard that she can prefer to go with her Leonard. That's how mothers are—I know it's silly."

"And shall you be miserable about her?"

"When I think of my own wedding day," his mother answered, "I can only hope her life will be different."

"But you can trust him to be good to her?"

"Yes, yes. They say he's not good enough for her. But I say if a man is gentle, as he is, and a girl is fond of him—there—it should be all right. He's as good as that."

"So you don't mind?"

"I would never have let a daughter of mine marry a man. I didn't feel to be generous through and through. And yet, there's a girl now she's gone."

They were both miserable, and wanted her back again. It seemed to Paul his mother looked lonely, in her new black silk blouse with its bit of white trimming.

"At any rate, mother, I'll never marry," he said.

"Ay, they all say that, my lad. You've not met the best yet. Only wait a year or two."

"But I don't marry, mother. I shall live with you, and we'll have a servant."

"Ay, my lad, it's easy to talk. We'll see when the time comes."

"What time? I'm nearly twenty-three."

"Yes, you're not out that would marry young. But in three years' time—"

"I shall be with you just the same."

"We'll see, my boy, we'll see."

"But you don't want me to marry?"

"I shouldn't like to think of you going through your life without anybody to care for you and do—us."

"And you think I ought to marry?"

"Sooner or later every man ought."

"But you'd rather it were later."

"It would be hard—and very hard. It's as they say:

'A son's my son till he takes him a wife,

But my daughter's my daughter the whole of her life.'"

"And you think I'd let a wife take me from you?"

"Well, you wouldn't ask her to marry your mother as well as you," Miss Merd smiled.

"She could do what she liked; she wouldn't have to interfere."

"She wouldn't—all she'd got you—and then you'd see."

"I never will see. I'll never marry while I've got you—I won't."

"But I shouldn't like to leave you with nobody, my boy," she cried.

"You're not going to leave me. What are you? Fifty-three! I'll give you till seventy-five. Then you are, I'm fit and forty-two. Then I'll marry a maid body. See!"

His mother sat and laughed.

"Go to bed," she said—"go to bed!"

"And we'll have a pretty house, you and me, and a servant, and it'll be just all right. I'll perhaps be rich by painting."

"Will you go to bed!"

"And then you'll have a pony-carriage. See yourself—a little Queen Victoria looking round!"

"I tell you to go to bed," she laughed.

He kissed her and went. His plans for the future were always the same.

Miss Merd sat brooding—about her daughter, about Paul, about Arthur. She seemed as loving Annie. The family was very closely bound. And she felt she must live now, to be with her

children. Life was so rich for her. Paul wanted her, and so did Arthur. Arthur never knew how deeply he loved her. He was a creature of the moment. Never yet had he been forced to realize himself. The army had disciplined his body, but not his soul. He was in perfect health and very handsome. His dark, vigorous hair sat close to his smallish head. There was something childish about his nose, something almost girlish about his dark blue eyes. But he had the full red mouth of a man under his brown mustaches, and his jaw was strong. It was his father's mouth; it was the nose and eyes of her own mother's people—good-looking, weak-principled folk. Mrs. Morel was anxious about him. Once he had really run the rig he was safe. But how *she* would he go?

The army had not really done him any good. He remained bitterly the authority of the petty officers. He feared having to obey as if he were an animal. But he had too much sense to kick. So he turned his attention to getting the best out of it. He could sing, he was a boon-companion. Often he got into scrapes, but they were the merry scrapes that are easily overlooked. So he made a good thing out of it, while his self-respect was in suppression. He wanted to his good looks and handsome figure, his refinement, his decent education to get him most of what he wanted, and he was not disappointed. Yet he was restless. Something seemed to gnaw him inside. He was never still, he was never alone. With his mother he was rather humble. Paul he admired and loved and despised slightly. And Paul admired and loved and despised him slightly.

Mrs. Morel had had a few pounds left to her by her father, and she decided to buy her son out of the army. He was wild with joy. Now he was like a lad taking a holiday.

He had always been fond of Beatrice Wylde, and during his furlough he picked up with her again. She was stronger and better in health. The two often went long walks together, Arthur taking her arm in soldier's fashion, rather stiffly. And she came to play the piano while he sang. Then Arthur would untie his tank collar. His gaze flaked, his eyes were bright, he sang in a merry tone. Afterwards they sat together on the sofa. He seemed to fancy his body: she was aware of him so—the strong chest, the sides, the thighs in their close-fitting trousers.

He liked to lapse into the dialect when he talked to her. She would sometimes smoke with him. Occasionally she would only take a few whiffs at his cigarette.

"Nay," he said to her one evening, when she reached for his cigarette. "Nay, the deesse. I'll giv' thee a smoken kiss if that's a mind."

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"I wanted a whiff, no like at all," she answered.

"Well, an' tha rlt ha'e a whiff," he said, "along wif 't kin."

"I want a draw at thy bag," she cried, reaching for the cigarette between his lips.

He was sitting with his shoulder touching her. She was small and quick as lightning. He just escaped.

"I'll g'e thee a smoke kin," he said.

"Tha'rt a knavey rubease, Aety Mirel," she said, sitting back.

"Ha'e a smoke kin?"

The soldier leaned forward to her, smiling. His face was near hers.

"Strenae!" she replied, turning away her head.

He took a draw at his cigarette, and purred up his mouth, and put his lips close to her. His dark-brown-cropped mustache stood out like a brush. She looked at the painted crimson lips, then suddenly snatched the cigarette from his fingers and dashed away. He, leaping after her, seized the comb from her back hair. She turned, threw the cigarette at him. He picked it up, put it in his mouth, and sat down.

"Nabaeae!" she cried. "Give me my comb!"

She was afraid that her hair, specially done for him, would come down. She stood with her hands to her head. He hid the comb between his knees.

"I've run get it," he said.

The cigarette tumbled between his lips with laughter as he spoke.

"Lair!" she said.

"'S true as I've heard!" he laughed, showing his hands.

"You knavey boy!" she exclaimed, rushing and scuffling for the comb, which he had under his knees. As she wrestled with him, pulling at his smooth, tight-covered knees, he laughed till he lay back on the sofa shaking with laughter. The cigarette fell from his mouth, almost singeing his throat. Under his defense too the blood flushed up, and he laughed till his blue eyes were blinded, his throat ruffles almost to choking. Then he sat up. Bubbles were putting in her comb.

"The rickled me, Bae," he said thickly.

Like a flash her small white hand went out and smacked his face. He started up, glaring at her. They stared at each other. Slowly the flash mounted her cheek, she dropped her eyes, then her head. He sat down mildly. She went into the gallery to adjust her hair. In private there she shed a few tears, she did not know what for.

When she returned she was purred up close. But it was only a film over her fire. He, with ruffled hair, was smiling upon the reflection.

She sat down opposite, in the arm-chair, and neither spoke. The clock ticked in the silence like blows.

"You are a little out, Beat," he said at length, half-apologetically.

"Well, you shouldn't be broken," she replied.

There was again a long silence. He whistled to himself like a man much against his defiance. Suddenly she went across to him and kissed him.

"Did it, poor thing!" she mocked.

He lifted his face, smiling curiously.

"Kiss?" he invited her.

"Darren's I?" she asked.

"Go on!" he challenged, his mouth lifted to her.

Deliberately, and with a genuine quivering smile that seemed to encompass her whole body, she put her mouth on his. Immediately his arms folded round her. As soon as the long kiss was finished she drew back her head from him, put her delicate fingers on his neck, through the open collar. Then she closed her eyes, giving herself up again to a kiss.

She acted of her own free will. What she would do she did, and made nobody responsible.

Paul felt life changing around him. The conditions of youth were gone. Now it was a house of grown-up people. Annie was a married woman, Arthur was following his own pleasure in a way unknown to his folk. For so long they had all lived at home, and gone out to pass their time. But now, for Annie and Arthur, life lay outside their mother's house. They came home for holiday and for rest. So there was that strange, half-empty feeling about the house, as if the birds had flown. Paul became more and more unsettled. Annie and Arthur had gone. He was restless to follow. Yet home was for him beside his mother. And still there was something else, something outside, something he wanted.

He grew more and more restless. Miriam did not satisfy him. His old mad desire to be with her grew weaker. Sometimes he met Clara in Nottingham, sometimes he went to meetings with her, sometimes he saw her at Wilby Farm. But on these last occasions the situation became strained. There was a strange antagonism between Paul and Clara and Miriam. With Clara he took on a smart, worldly, mocking tone very antagonistic to Miriam. It did not matter what went before. She might be his wife and bed with him. Then as soon as Clara appeared, it all vanished, and he played to the accompaniment.

Miriam had one beautiful evening with him in the hay. He had been on the horse-rails, and, having finished, came to help
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DEFEAT OF MIRIAM

her to put the hay in cockle. Then he talked to her of his hopes and despair, and his whole soul seemed to lie bare before her. She felt as if she watched the very quivering stuff of life in him. The moon came out: they walked home together: he seemed to have come to her because he needed her so badly, and she listened to him, gave him all her love and her faith. It seemed to her he brought her the best of himself to keep, and that she would guard it all her life. Nay, the sky did not cherish her more more surely and eternally than she would guard the good in the soul of Paul Morel. She went to home alone, smiling waited, glad in her faith.

And then, the next day, Clara came. They went to have tea in the hayfield. Miriam watched the evening dawning to gold and shadows. And all the time Paul was sporting with Clara. He made higher and higher heaps of hay that they were jumping over. Miriam did not care for the game, and stood aside. Edgar and Geoffrey and Maurice and Clara and Paul jumped. Paul won, because he was lighter. Clara's mind was raised. She could run like an American. Paul loved the determined way she rushed at the haycock and leaped, landed on the other side, lay beneath shadow, her thick hair coming undone.

"You touched!" he cried. "You touched!"

"Not!" she flaked, turning to Edgar. "I didn't touch, did I? What's I then?"

"I couldn't say," laughed Edgar.

None of them could say.

"But you touched," said Paul. "You've broken."

"I did not touch!" she cried.

"As plain as anything," said Paul.

"Box his ears for me!" she cried to Edgar.

"Nay," Edgar laughed. "I dares't. You must do it yourself."

"And nothing can alter the fact that you touched," laughed Paul.

She was furious with him. Her little triumph before these lads and men was gone. She had forgotten herself in the game. Now he was to humiliate her.

"I think you are despicable!" she said.

And again he laughed, in a way that tortured Miriam.

"And I know you couldn't jump that heap," he teased.

She turned her back on him. Yet everybody could see that the only person she listened to, or was conscious of, was he, and he of her. It pleased the men to see this battle between them. But Miriam was tortured.

Paul would choose the lower in place of the higher, she saw. He could be unfaithful to himself, unfaithful to the real, deep Paul Morel. There was a danger of his becoming frivolous, of his

running after his satisfactions like any Arthur, or like his father. It made Miriam bitter to think that he should throw away his soul for this flippant traffic of triviality with Clara. She walked in bitterness and silence, while the other two rallied each other, and Paul sported.

And afterwards, he would not own it, but he was rather ashamed of himself, and protested himself before Miriam. Then again he rebelled.

"I'm not religious or *be* religious," he said. "I realize a crew is religious when it sails across the sky. But it only does it because it feels itself carried to where it's going, not because it thinks it is being moved."

But Miriam knew that one should be religious in everything, have God, wherever God might be, present in everything.

"I don't believe God knows such a lot about Himself," he cried. "God doesn't know things, He *is* things. And I've seen He's not useful."

And then it seemed to her that Paul was arguing God *on* to his own side, because he wanted his own way and his own pleasure. There was a long battle between him and her. He was unyielding to her even in her own presence; then he was ashamed, then repentant; then he hated her, and went off again. These were the ever-recurring conditions.

She heard him to the bottom of his soul. There she remained—and, passive, a worshipper. And he caused her sorrow. Half the time he grieved for her, half the time he hated her. She was his conscience; and he felt, somehow, he had got a conscience that was too much for him. He could not leave her, because in one way she did not hold the best of him. He could not stay with her because she did not take the best of him, which was three-quarters. So he chafed himself into madness over her.

When she was twenty-one he wrote her a letter which could only have been written to her.

"May I speak of our old, warm love, this last time. It, too, is changing, is it not? Say, has not the body of that love died, and left you its indispensable soul? You see, I can give you a spirit's love, I have given it you this long, long time; but not embodied passion. See, you are a nun. I have given you what I would give a holy nun—as a mystic meant to a mystic man. Surely you cannot fit her. Yet you regret—no, have regretted—the other. In all our relations no body enters. I do not talk to you through the senses—rather through the spirit. That is why we cannot love in the common sense. Ours is not an everyday affection. As yet we are

mortal, and to live side by side with any another would be deplorable, for somehow with you I cannot long be mortal, and, you know, to be always beyond this mortal state would be no loss to. If people marry, they must live together as affectionate humans, who may be contemplative with each other without feeling unloved—not as two souls. So I feel it.

"Ought I to send this letter—I doubt it. But there—it is best to understand. Au revoir."

Miriam read this letter twice, after which she mailed it up. A year later she broke the seal to show her mother the letter.

"You are a man—you are a man." The words went into her heart again and again. Nothing he ever had said had gone into her so deeply, finally, like a mortal wound.

She answered him two days after the party.

"Our intimacy would have been all too brief but for our little minutes," she wrote. "Was the minute mine?"

Almost immediately he replied to her from Nottingham, sending her at the same time a little "Omar Khayyam."

"I am glad you answered; you are so calm and natural you put me to shame. What a ravine I am! We are often out of sympathy. But in fundamentals we may always be together. I think."

"I must thank you for your sympathy with my painting and drawing. Many a sketch is dedicated to you. I do look forward to your criticisms, which, to my shame and glory, are always good appreciations. It is a lovely joke, dear. Au revoir."

This was the end of the first phase of Paul's love-affairs. He was now about twenty-three years old, and, though still virgin, the sex instinct that Miriam had over-refined for so long now grew particularly strong. Often, as he talked to Clara Davis, came that thickening and quickening of his blood, that peculiar concentration in the brain, as if something were alive there, a new self or a new source of consciousness, warning him that sooner or later he would have to seek one woman or another. But he belonged to Miriam. Of that she was so fixedly sure that he allowed her right.

Clara

When he was twenty-three years old Paul sent in a landscape to the winter exhibition at Nottingham Courts. Miss Jordan had taken a great deal of interest in him, had invited him to her house, where he met other artists. He was beginning to grow ambitious.

One morning the postman came just as he was walking in the gallery. Suddenly he heard a wild noise from his mother. Rushing into the kitchen, he found her standing on the hearthrug wildly waving a letter and crying "Harrah!" as if she had gone mad. He was shocked and frightened.

"Merry, mother!" he exclaimed.

She flew to him, flung her arms round him for a moment, then snatched the letter, crying:

"Harrah, my boy! I know we should do it!"

He was afraid of her—the small, severe woman with graying hair suddenly bursting out in such frenzy. The postman came retreating back, afraid something had happened. They saw his tipped cap over the short curtain. Mrs. Mabel rushed to the door.

"His picture's got first prize, Fred," she cried, "and it's sold for twenty guineas."

"My word, that's something like!" said the young postman, whom they had known all his life.

"And Major Merton has bought it!" she cried.

"It looks like really something, that does, Mrs. Mabel," said the postman, his blue eyes bright. He was glad to have brought such a lucky letter. Mrs. Mabel went indoors and sat down, trembling. Paul was afraid lest she might have misread the letter, and might be disappointed after all. He scrutinized it once, twice. Yes, he became convinced it was true. Then he sat down, his heart beating with joy.

"Mother!" he exclaimed.

"Didn't I say we should do it!" she said, pretending she was not crying.

He took the letter off the fire and snatched the tea.

"You didn't drink, mother!"—he began anxiously.

"No, my son—not to wash—that I expected a good deal!"

"But not so much," he said.

"Now—now I know we should do it."

And then she resumed her composition, apparently at least. He sat with his shirt turned back, showing his young chest almost like a girl's, and the towel in his hand, his hair sticking up wet.

"Twenty guineas, mother! That's just what you want to buy Arthur out. Now you needn't borrow any. I'll just do."

"Indeed, I shan't take it all," she said.

"But why?"

"Because I shan't."

"Hill—you have twelve pounds, I'll have nine."

They caressed about sharing the twenty guineas. She wanted to take only the five pounds she needed. He would not hear of it. So they got over the stress of emotion by quarrelling.

Moorl came home at night from the pit, saying:

"They tell me Paul's got first prize for his picture, and sold it to Lord Henry Berkeley for fifty pounds."

"Oh, what stupid people do tell!" she cried.

"Ha!" he answered. "I said I was sure it was a lie. But they said that told Fred Mordhaugh."

"As if I would tell him such stuff!"

"Ha!" answered the miner.

But he was disappointed nevertheless.

"It's true he has got the first prize," said Mrs. Moorl.

The miner sat heavily in his chair.

"Has he, beguy?" he exclaimed.

He moved across the room heavily.

"But as for fifty pounds—such nonsense!" She was silent awhile.

"Major Mordhaugh bought it for twenty guineas, that's true."

"Twenty guineas! The silver says!" exclaimed Moorl.

"Yes, and it was worth it."

"Ay!" he said. "I don't misbebe it. But twenty guineas for a bit of paintin' as he knocked off in an hour or two!"

He was silent with musing of his son. Mrs. Moorl smiled, as if it were nothing.

"And when does he handle th' money?" asked the collier.

"That I couldn't tell you. When the picture is sent home, I suppose."

There was silence. Moorl stared at the rug-burnt instead of eating his dinner. His black nose, with the head all grained with work lay on the table. His wife pretended not to see him rub the back of his hand across his eyes, nor the smudge in the coal-dust on his black face.

"Yes, an' that other lad 'ed 'is done so much if they hadn't but killed 'im," he said quietly.

The thought of William went through Mrs. May's like a cold blade. It left her feeling she was tired, and wanted rest.

Paul was invited to dinner at Mr. Jordan's. Afterwards he said:

"Mother, I want an evening suit."

"Yes, I was afraid you would," she said. She was glad. There was a moment or two of silence. "There's that one of William's," she continued, "that I know cost four pounds six and which he'd only worn three times."

"Should you like me to wear it, mother?" he asked.

"Yes. I think it would fit you—at least the coat. The trousers would want shortening."

He went upstairs and put on the coat and vest. Coming down, he looked strange in a flannel collar and a flannel shirt-front, with an evening coat and vest. It was rather large.

"The tailor can make it right," she said, smoothing her hand over his shoulder. "It's beautiful stuff. I never could find in my heart to let your father wear the trousers, and very glad I am now."

And as she smoothed her hand over the silk collar she thought of her elder son. But this son was living through inside the clothes. She passed her hand down his back to feel him. He was alive and here. The other was dead.

He went out to dinner several times in his evening suit that had been William's. Each time his mother's heart was full with pride and joy. She was amazed now. The mode she and the children had bought for William were in his shirt-front; he wore one of William's dress shirts. But he had an elegant figure. His face was rough, but warm-looking and rather pleasing. He did not look particularly a gentleman, but she thought he looked quite a man.

He told her everything that took place, everything that was said. It was as if she had been there. And he was dying to introduce her to these new friends who had dinner at seven-thirty in the evening.

"Go along with you!" she said. "What do they want to know me for?"

"They do!" he cried indignantly. "If they want to know me—and they say they do—then they want to know you, because you are quite as clever as I am."

"Go along with you, child!" she laughed.

But she began to spare her hands. They, too, were work-worn now. The skin was shiny with so much hot water, the cracks rather swollen. But she began to be careful to keep them out of soda. She expected what they had been—so small and

expensive. And when Annie insisted on her having more stylish blossoms to suit her age, she submitted. She even went as far as to allow a black velvet bow to be placed on her hair. Then she smiled in her aromatic mirror, and was sure she looked a sight. But she looked a lady, Paul declared, as much as Mrs. Major Winston, and far, far nicer. The family was coming on. Only Mabel remained unchanged, or rather, lagged slowly.

Paul and his mother now had long discussions about life. Religion was fading into the background. He had dismissed away all the beliefs that would harp on him, had cleared the ground, and came more or less to the bedrock of belief that one should feel inside oneself for right and wrong, and should have the patience to gradually realize one's God. Now life concerned him more.

"You know," he said to his mother, "I don't want to belong to the well-to-do middle class. I like my common people best. I belong to the common people."

"But if anyone else said so, my son, wouldn't you be in a man. I'm sure you consider yourself equal to any gentleman."

"In myself," he answered, "not in my class or my education or my manner. But in myself I am."

"Very well, then. Then why talk about the common people?"

"Because—the difference between people isn't in their class, but in themselves. Only from the middle classes can you learn, and from the common people—life itself, warmth. You feel their hate and love."

"It's all very well, my boy. But, then, why don't you go and talk to your father's girl?"

"But they're rather different."

"Not at all. They're the common people. After all, whom do you rub with now—among the common people? Those that exchange ideas, like the middle classes. The rest don't interest you."

"But—there's the life—"

"I don't believe there's a jot more life from Miriam than you could get from any educated girl—say Miss Winston. It is just who are snobbish about class."

She finally warned him to climb down the middle classes, a thing not very difficult, she knew. And she wanted him in the end to marry a lady.

Now she began to resent him in his restless fretting. He still kept up his connection with Miriam, could neither break free nor go the whole length of engagement. And this indecision seemed to bleed him of his energy. Moreover, his mother suspected him of an unrecognized leaning towards Clara, and, since the letter

was a married woman, she wished he would fall in love with one of the girls in a better state of life. But he was stupid, and would refuse to love or even to admire a girl much, just because she was his social superior.

"My boy," said his mother to him, "all your cleanness, your tossing away from old things, and making life in your own hands, doesn't seem to bring you much happiness."

"What is happiness?" he cried. "It's nothing to me! How can I be happy?"

The plump question disturbed her.

"That's for you to judge, my lad. But if you could meet some good woman who would make you happy—and you began to think of settling your life—when you have the means—so that you could work without all this fussing—it would be much better for you."

He frowned. His mother caught him on the rim of his wound of Miriam. He pushed the tangled hair off his forehead, his eyes full of pain and fire.

"You mean duty, mother," he cried. "That's a woman's whole doctrine for life—sins of soul and physical comfort. And I do despise it."

"Oh, do you?" replied his mother. "And do you call yours a divine discontent?"

"Yes. I don't care about its divinity. But damn your happiness! So long as life's full, it doesn't matter whether it's happy or not. I'm afraid your happiness would bore me."

"You never give it a chance," she said. Then suddenly all her passion of grief over him broke out. "But it does matter!" she cried. "And you ought to be happy, you ought to try to be happy, to live to be happy. How could I bear to think your life wouldn't be a happy one?"

"Your own's been bad enough, mother, but it hasn't left you so much worse off than the folk who've been happier. I reckon you've done well. And I am the same. Aren't I well enough off?"

"You're not, my son. Bumble—buckle—and suffer. It's about all you do, as far as I can see."

"But why not, my dear? I tell you it's the best——"

"It isn't. And one ought to be happy, one ought."

By this time Mrs. Morel was weeping violently. Struggles of this kind often took place between her and her son, when she seemed to fight for his very life against his own will to die. He took her in his arms. She was ill and pitiful.

"Never mind, Little," he murmured. "So long as you don't feel life's palsy and a miserable business, the rest doesn't matter, happiness or unhappiness."

She pressed him to her.

"But I want you to be happy," she said passionately.

"Oh, my dear—any rather you want me to live."

Mrs. Mabel felt as if her heart would break for him. At this time she knew he would not live. He had that poignant consciousness about himself, his own suffering, his own life, which is a flame of slow suicide. It almost broke her heart. With all the passion of her strong nature she hated Miriam for having in this subtle way undermined his joy. It did not matter to her that Miriam could not help it. Miriam did it, and she hated her.

She wished so much he would fall in love with a girl equal to her in point—educated and strong. But he would not look at anybody above him in station. He seemed to like Mrs. Downs. At any rate that feeling was wholesome. His mother prayed and prayed for him, that he might not be wasted. That was all her prayer—not for his soul or his righteousness, but that he might not be wasted. And while he slept, for hours and hours she thought and prayed for him.

He drifted away from Miriam imperceptibly, without knowing he was going. Arthur only felt the away to be missing. The baby was born six months after his wedding. Mrs. Mabel got him a job under the firm again, at twenty-one shillings a week. She furnished for him, with the help of Beatrice's modest, a little cottage of two rooms. He was taught now. It did not matter how he licked and struggled, he was fast. For a time he chafed, was irritable with his young wife, who loved him; he was almost distracted when the baby, which was delicate, cried or gave trouble. He grumbled for hours to his mother. The only aid, "Well, my lad, you did it yourself, now you must make the best of it." And then the girl's heart went out of him. He buckled to work, undertook his responsibilities, acknowledged that he belonged to his wife and child, and did make a good head of it. He had never been very closely imbued into the family. Now he was gone altogether.

The months went slowly along. Paul had more or less got into connexion with the Socialists, Suffragists, Colonial people in Nottingham, owing to his acquaintance with Clara. One day a friend of his and of Clara's, in Burnwood, asked him to take a message to Mrs. Downs. He went in the evening across Seston Market to Rother Hill. He found the house in a mean little street paved with granite cobbles and having a covering of dark blue, grooved bricks. The front door went up a step from off the rough pavement, where the floor of pattern-lyr carpet and decorated. The brass plate on the door was so old that the metal work showed between the parts. He stood on the street below and

knocked. There came a heavy footstep; a large, stout woman of about sixty covered above him. He looked up at her from the pavement. She had a rather severe face.

She admitted him into the parlor, which opened on to the street. It was a small, stuffy, delicate room, of mahogany, and densely enlargements of photographs of departed people there in earlier. Mrs. Radford left him. She was steady, direct, martial. In a moment Clara appeared. She flushed deeply, and he was covered with confusion. It seemed as if she did not like being discovered in her home circumstances.

"I thought it couldn't be your voice," she said.

But she might as well be leaping for a sheep as for a lamb. She invited him out of the sanctuaries of a parlor into the kitchen.

That was a little, darkish room too, but it was smothered in white lace. The mother had seated herself again by the cupboard, and was drawing thread from a vast web of lace. A clump of stuff and revealed cotton was at her right hand, a heap of three-quarter-inch lace lay on her left, whilst in front of her was the mountain of the lace web, piling the hearthtop. Threads of early cotton, pulled out from between the lengths of lace, strewn over the floor and the fireplace. Paul dared not go forward, for fear of treading on piles of white stuff.

On the table was a jewelry for cording the lace. There was a pack of brown cardboard squares, a pack of cards of lace, a little box of pins, and on the table lay a heap of drawn lace.

The room was all lace, and it was so dark and warm that the white, snowy stuff seemed the same distance.

"If you're coming in you won't have to mind the work," said Mrs. Radford. "I know we've about blocked up. But sit you down."

Clara, much embarrassed, gave him a chair against the wall opposite the white heaps. Then she herself took her place on the sofa, shamefully.

"Will you drink a bottle of stout?" Mrs. Radford asked.

"Clara, get him a bottle of stout."

He protested, but Mrs. Radford insisted.

"You look as if you could do with it," she said. "Haven't you seen any more color than that?"

"It's only a thick skin I've got that doesn't show the blood through," he answered.

Clara, ashamed and chastised, brought him a bottle of stout and a glass. He poured out some of the black stuff.

"Well," he said, lifting the glass, "here's health!"

"And thank you," said Mrs. Radford.

He took a drink of stout.

"And light yourself a cigarette, as long as you don't set the house on fire," said Mrs. Radford.

"Thank you," he replied.

"May you needn't thank me," she answered. "I'll be glad to send a bit of trouble in th' 'way again. A house-ol' woman is as dead as a house w' no fire, in my thinkin'. I'm not a spider as likes a corner to myself. I like a man about, if he's only something to snap at."

Clara began to work. Her Jenny spun with a subdued hum: the white lace begged from between her fingers as in the cart. It was filled; she snipped off the length, and plucked the end down to the bodied hem. Then she put a new stud in her Jenny. Paul watched her. She sat square and magnificent. Her throat and arms were bare. The blood still rounded below her eyes; she kept her head in shadow of her hair. Her face was set on her work. Her arms were creamy and full of life beside the white lace; her large, well-kempt hands worked with a balanced movement, as if nothing would hurry them. He, not knowing, watched her all the time. He saw the arch of her neck from the shoulder, as she bent her head; he saw the curl of dark hair; he watched her moving, glancing arm.

"I've heard a bit about you from Clara," concluded the mother.

"You're in Jordan's, aren't you?" She drew her face unbecom-

"Yes."

"Ay, well, and I can remember when Thomas Jacobs used to ask us for one of my coffins."

"Did he?" laughed Paul. "And did he get it?"

"Sometimes he did, sometimes he didn't—which was lately. For he's the sort that takes all and gives nothing, he is—or used to be."

"I think he's very decent," said Paul.

"Yes; well, I'm glad to hear it."

Mrs. Radford looked across at him steadily. There was something determined about her that he liked. Her face was falling loose, but her eyes were calm, and there was something strong in her that made it seem she was not old; mostly her wrinkles and loose cheeks were an unobtrusive. She had the strength and sang-froid of a woman in the prime of life. She continued drawing the lace with slow, dignified movements. The big web came up inevitably over her apron; the length of lace fell away at her side. Her arms were finely shapely, but glossy and yellow as old ivory. They had not the peculiar dull gloss that made Clara's so seducing to him.

" And you've been going with Missus Lelvent? " the mother asked him.

" Well,— " he answered.

" You, she's a nice girl, " she continued. " She's very nice, but she's a bit too much above this world to suit my fancy."

" She is a bit like that, " he agreed.

" She'll never be satisfied till she's got wings and can fly over everybody's head, she won't, " she said.

Clara broke in, and he told her his news. She spoke humbly to him. He had surprised her in her dudgeon. To have her humble made him feel as if he were lifting his head in expectation.

" Do you like jennying? " he asked.

" What can a woman do? " she replied bitterly.

" Is it rewarded? "

" More or less. Isn't all woman's work? That's another trick the men have played, since we forced ourselves into the labour market."

" Now then, you shut up about the men, " said her mother. " If the women wasn't fools, the men wouldn't be bad ones, that's what I say. No man was ever shut out w' me but what he got it back again. Not but what they're a lousy lot, there's no denying it."

" But they're all right really, aren't they? " he asked.

" Well, they're a bit different from women, " she answered.

" Would you care to be back at Jordan's? " he asked Clara.

" I don't think so, " she replied.

" Yes, she would! " cried her mother; " thank her now if she could get back. Don't you listen to her. She's for ever on that 'igh horse of love, an' it's back's that thin an' starved it'll cut her I two one of these days."

Clara suffered badly from her mother. Paul felt as if his eyes were coming very wide open. Wasn't he to take Clara's submissions as casually, after all? She spun steadily at her work. He experienced a thrill of joy, thinking she might need his help. She seemed starved and deprived of so much. And her arms moved mechanically, that should never have been subjected to a machine, and her head was bowed to the loom, that never should have been bowed. She seemed to be stranded there among the refuse that life has thrown away, doing her jennying. It was a bitter thing to her to be put aside by life, as if it had no use for her. No wonder she protested.

She came with him to the door. He stood below in the mean street, looking up at her. So fine she was in her stature and her bearing, she reminded him of Jesus descended. As she stood in the doorway, she winced from the street, from her surroundings.

"And you will go with Mrs. Hodgkinson to Hockaday?"

He was talking quite meaningfully, only wanting her. Her gray eyes at last met his. They looked dumb with humiliation, pleading with a kind of captive misery. He was shaken and so a lion. He had thought her high and mighty.

When he left her, he wanted to run. He went to the station in a sort of dream, and was at home without realising he had moved out of her street.

He had an idea that Susan, the owner of the spiral girls, was about to be married. He asked her the next day.

"I say, Susan, I heard a whisper of your getting married. What about it?"

Susan flushed red.

"Who's been talking to you?" she replied.

"Nobody. I merely heard a whisper that you were thinking——"

"Well, I say, though you needn't tell anybody. What's more, I wish I wasn't."

"Nay, Susan, you won't make me believe that."

"Steady! You can believe it, though. I'd rather stop here a devoted time."

Paul was perturbed.

"Who, Susan?"

The girl's colour was high, and her eyes flashed.

"That's why!"

"And what you?"

For answer, she looked at him. There was about him a candour and gentleness which made the women trust him. He understood.

"Ah, I'm sorry," he said.

Tram came in his eyes.

"But you'll see it'll turn out all right. You'll make the best of it," he continued rather wishfully.

"There's nothing else for it."

"Yes, there's making the best of it. Try and make it all right."

He soon made occasion to call again on Clara.

"Would you," he said, "care to come back to Jordan's?"

She put down her work, laid her beautiful arms on the table, and looked at him. The same moments without answering. Gradually the flush mounted her cheek.

"Why?" she asked.

Paul felt rather awkward.

"Well, because Susan is thinking of leaving," he said.

Clara went on with her journeying. The white lace leaped in side jumps and bounds on to the end. He waited for her. Without raising her head, she said at last, in a peculiar low voice:

"Have you said anything about it?"

"Except to you, not a word."

There was again a long silence.

"I will apply when the advertisement is out," she said.

"You will apply before that. I will let you know exactly when."

She went on spinning her little machine, and did not contradict him.

Clark came in Jordan's. Some of the older hands, Fanny among them, remembered her earlier rule, and cordially disliked the newcomer. Clark had shown him "keep," reserved, and superior. She had never mixed with the girls as one of themselves. If she had occasion to feel back, she did it coolly and with perfect politeness, which the detractor felt to be a bigger insult than rudeness. Towards Fanny, the poor, suffering blackhead, Clark was unflinchingly compassionate and gentle, as a result of which Fanny had more bitter tears than ever the rough tongue of the other women had caused her.

There was something in Clark that Paul disliked, and much that pleased him. If she were about, he always watched her strong throat or her neck, upon which the blonde hair grew low and fluffy. There was a fine down, almost invisible, upon the skin of her face and arms, and when once he had perceived it, he saw it always.

When he was at his work, painting in the afternoon, she would come and stand near to him, perfectly motionless. Then he felt her, though she neither spoke nor touched him. Although she stood a yard away he felt as if he were in contact with her. Then he could point no more. He hung down the brush, and turned to talk to her.

Sometimes she praised his work; sometimes she was critical and cold.

"You are affected in that place," she would say; and, as there was an element of truth in her condemnation, his blood boiled with anger.

Again: "What of this?" he would ask enthusiastically.

"It's all!" She made a small doubtful sound. "It doesn't interest me much."

"Because you don't understand it," he retorted.

"Then why ask me about it?"

"Because I thought you would understand."

She would shrug her shoulders in scorn of his work. She saddened him. He was furious. Then he asked her, and went into passionate exposition of his stuff. This amused and stimulated her. But she never owned that she had been wrong.

During the two years that she had belonged to the women's

movement she had acquired a fair amount of education, and, having had some of Miriam's passion to be interested, had taught herself French, and could read in that language with a struggle. She considered herself as a woman apart, and particularly apart from her class. The girls in the spiral department were all of good homes. It was a small, special industry, and had a certain distinction. There was an air of refinement in both rooms. But Clara was aloof from her fellow-workers.

None of these things, however, did she reveal to Paul. She was not the one to give herself away. There was a sense of mystery about her. She was so reserved, he felt she had much to reserve. Her history was open on the surface, but its inner meaning was hidden from everybody. It was missing. And then sometimes he caught her looking at him from under her brows with an almost tortoise, rather acrid, which made him move quickly. Often she met his eyes. But then her own voice, as it were, covered over, revealing nothing. She gave him a look, heaviest smile. She was so faint extraordinarily provocative, because of the knowledge she seemed to possess, and gathered fruit of experience he could not attain.

One day he picked up a copy of *Levin de son Abadie* from her work-bench.

"You read French, do you?" he asked.

Clara glanced round negligently. She was making an elastic stocking of telescope silk, turning the spiral machine with slow, balanced regularity, occasionally bending down to see her work or to adjust the needles; then her magnificent neck, with its down and fine pencils of hair, showed white against the lavender, hazy silk. She turned a few more rounds, and stopped.

"What did you say?" she asked, smiling sweetly.

Paul's eyes glittered at her insolent indifference to him.

"I did not know you read French," he said, very polite.

"Did you not?" she replied, with a faint, sarcastic smile.

"Notion enough!" he said, but scarcely loud enough to be heard.

He shut his mouth angrily as he watched her. She seemed to scorn the work she mechanically produced; yet she knew she made were as nearly perfect as possible.

"You don't like spiral work," he said.

"Oh, well, all work is work," she answered, as if she knew all about it.

He marvelled at her coldness. He had to do everything badly. She must be something special.

"What would you prefer to do?" he asked.

She laughed at him indulgently, as she said:

"There is no little likelihood of my ever being given a choice that I haven't wanted since considering."

"Feh! " he said, contemptuous on his side now. "You only say that because you're too proud to even up what you want and can't get."

"You know me very well," she replied coldly.

"I know you think you're terrific great shakes, and that you live under the eternal insult of working in a factory."

He was very angry and very rude. She merely turned away from him in disdain. He walked whistling down the room, fisted and laughed with Hilda.

Later on he said to himself:

"What was I so impudent to Clara for?" He was rather annoyed with himself, at the same time glad. "Serve her right, she sticks with those girls," he said to himself angrily.

In the afternoon he came down. There was a certain weight on his heart which he wanted to remove. He thought to do it by offering her chocolate.

"Have one?" he said. "I bought a handful to sweeten me up."

To his great relief, she accepted. He sat on the work-bench beside her machine, twisting a piece of silk round his finger. She looked him for his quick, unexpected movements, like a young animal. His feet swung as he pondered. The room lay strewn on the bench. She bent over her machine, grinding rhythmically, then stooping to see the working that hung beneath, pulled down by the weight. He watched the hardiness crouching of her back, and the apron-strings curling on the floor.

"There is always about you," he said, "a sort of waiting. Whatever I see you doing, you're not really there: you are waiting—like Penelope when she did her weaving." He could not help a quiver of whimsy. "I'll call you Penelope," he said.

"Would it make any difference?" she said, carefully removing one of her needles.

"That doesn't matter, so long as it pleases me. Now, I say, you seem to forget I'm your boss. It just occurs to me."

"And what does that mean?" she asked coolly.

"It means I've got a right to boss you."

"Is there anything you want to complain about?"

"Oh, I say, you needn't be nasty," he said angrily.

"I don't know what you want," she said, continuing her task.

"I want you to treat me nicely and respectfully."

"Call you 'sir,' perhaps?" she asked quietly.

"Yes, call me 'sir.' I should love it."

"Then I wish you would go upstairs, do."

His mouth closed, and a frown came on his face. He jumped suddenly down.

"You're too blamed superior for anything," he said.

And he went away to the other girls. He felt he was being angrier than he had any need to be. In fact, he suspected deeply that was he showing off. But if he went, then he would. Clara heard him laughing, in a way she hated, with the girls down the next river.

When at evening he went through the department after the girls had gone, he saw his cigarettes lying untouched in front of Clara's machine. He left them. In the morning they were still there, and Clara was at work. Later on Monday, a little braver, they called Puffy, called to him:

"Hey, haven't you got a chocolate for anybody?"

"Sorry, Puffy," he replied. "I meant to have offered them; then I went and forgot 'em."

"I think you did," she answered.

"I'll bring you some this afternoon. You don't want them after they've been lying about, do you?"

"Oh, I'm not particular," smiled Puffy.

"Oh no," he said. "They'll be dirty."

He went up to Clara's bench.

"Sorry I left those things lying about," he said.

She looked smug. He gathered them together in his fist.

"They'll be dirty now," he said. "You should have taken them. I wonder why you didn't. I meant to have told you I wanted you to."

He flung them out of the window into the yard below. He just glanced at her. She winced from his eyes.

In the afternoon he brought another packet.

"Will you take some?" he said, offering them first to Clara.

"There are fresh."

She accepted him, and put it on to the bench.

"Oh, take several—for luck," he said.

She took a couple more, and put them on the bench also. Then she turned in confusion to her work. He went on up the room.

"Here you are Puffy," he cried. "Don't be greedy!"

"Are they all for her?" cried the others, making up.

"Of course they're not," he said.

The girls clamoured round. Puffy drew back from her sister.

"Don't cut!" she cried. "I can have five pinks, can't I, Fred?"

"Be nice with 'em," he said, and went away.

"You are a dear," the girls cried.

"Tempter," he answered.

He went past Clara without speaking. She felt the three chocolate presents would burn her if she touched them. It needed all her courage to slip them into the pocket of her apron.

The girls loved him and were afraid of him. He was so nice while he was nice, but if he were offended, so distant, treating them as if they scarcely existed, or not more than the bottom of a chair. And then, if they were impudent, he said quietly: "Do you mind going on with your work," and stood and watched.

When he celebrated his twenty-third birthday, the house was in trouble. Arthur was just going to be married. His mother was not well. His father, getting an old man, and lame from his accident, was given a paltry, poor job. Michael was an eternal reproach. He left his own himself to her, yet could not give himself. The house, moreover, needed his support. He was pulled in all directions. He was not glad it was his birthday. It made him busy.

He got to work at eight o'clock. Most of the clerks had not turned up. The girls were not due till 8.30. As he was changing his coat, he heard a voice behind him say:

"Paul, Paul, I want you."

It was Fanny, the housemaid, standing at the top of her stairs, her face radiant with a secret. Paul looked at her in astonishment.

"I want you," she said.

He stood, at a loss.

"Come in," she called. "Come on before you begin of the letters."

He went down the half-dozen steps into her dry, narrow, "finishing-off" room. Fanny walked before him: her black bodice was short—the waist was under her armpits—and her green-black calico skirt seemed very long, as she strode with big strides before the young man, himself so graceful. She went to her nest at the narrow end of the room, where the window opened on to chimney-pots. Paul watched her thin hands and her flat white as she combedly twisted her white apron, which was spread on the bench in front of her. She hesitated.

"You didn't think we'd forget you?" she asked, reproachful.

"Why?" he asked. He had forgotten his birthday himself.

"'Why,' he says! 'Why,' look here!" She pointed to the calendar, and he saw, surrounding the big black number "21," hundreds of little crosses in black ink.

"Oh, leave for my birthday," he laughed. "How did you know?"

"You, you want to know, don't you?" Fanny mocked, laughily

delighted. "There's one from everybody—except Lady Clara—and me from me. But I shan't tell you how many I got!"

"Oh, I know, you're generous," he said.

"There you are mistaken!" she cried indignantly. "I could never be so self!" His voice was strong and confident.

"You always pretend to be such a hard-hearted hump," he laughed. "And you know you're as sentimental——"

"I'd rather be called sentimental than *hump* man," Percy blurted. Paul knew she referred to Clara, and he smiled.

"Do you say such nasty things about me?" he laughed.

"No, my duck," the handback woman answered, lavishly tender. She was thirty-nine. "No, my duck, because you don't think yourself a *fine* figure in marble and as modest that dirt. I've argued so you, aren't I, Paul?" and the question delighted her.

"Why, we're not better than any woman, are we?" he replied.

"But I'm as good as you, aren't I, Paul?" she pointed daringly.

"Of course you are. If it comes to goodness, you're better."

She was rather afraid of the situation. She might get hysterical.

"I thought I'd get here before the others—wasn't they say I'm deep! Now that your eyes——" she said.

"And open your mouth, and see what God made you," he continued, taking action in words, and expecting a piece of chocolate. He heard the rattle of the spoon, and a faint clink of metal. "I'm going to look," he said.

He opened his eyes. Percy, her long cheeks flushed, her blue eyes shining, was gazing at him. There was a little bundle of palm-roses on the bench before him. He turned pale.

"No, Percy," he said quickly.

"Pecor us all," she answered hastily.

"No, but——"

"Are they the right sort?" she asked, rocking herself with delight.

"Jewel they're the best in the catalogue."

"But they're the right ones?" she cried.

"They're off the little list I'd made to get when my ship came in." He bit his lip.

Percy was overcome with emotion. She must turn the conversation.

"They was all so there to do by they all paid their share, all except the Queen of Sheba."

The Queen of Sheba was Clara.

"And wouldn't she join?" Paul asked.

"She didn't get the chance; we never told her; we wasn't going to have her losing the show. We didn't want her to join."

Paul laughed at the woman. He was much moved. At last he must go. She was very close to him. Suddenly she flung her arms round his neck and kissed him vehemently.

"I can give you a kiss to-day," she said apologetically. "You've kissed so often, it's made my heart ache."

Paul kissed her, and left her. Her arms were so painfully thin that his heart ached also.

That day he met Clara as he ran downstairs to wash his hands at dinner-time.

"You have stayed to dinner!" he exclaimed. It was unusual for her.

"Yes; and I seem to have dined on old surgical-appliance stock. I must go out now, or I shall feel stale India-rubber right through."

She laughed. He instantly caught her wrist.

"You are going anywhere?" he asked.

They went together up to the Casino. Outdoors she looked very plainly, down to ugliness; indoors she always looked nice. She walked with hesitating steps alongside Paul, leaving and turning away from him. Dowdy in dress, and drooping, she showed to great disadvantage. He could scarcely recognise her strong form, that seemed to slumber with power. She appeared almost insignificant, drowning her stature in her stoop, as she drank from the public gaze.

The Casino grounds were very green and fresh. Climbing the precipitous moor, he laughed and chattered, but she was silent, seeming to brood over something. There was scarcely time to go inside the squat, square building that crowns the bluff of rock. They leaned upon the wall where the cliff runs sheer down to the Park. Below them, in their holes in the sandstone, pigeons pressed themselves and cooed softly. *Away* down upon the boulevard at the foot of the rock, they were used in their own pools of shadow, and tiny people were worrying about in almost ludicrous ignorance.

"You feel as if you could sweep up the folk like tadpoles, and have a handful of them," he said.

She laughed, answering:

"Yes; it is not necessary to get far off in order to see us profoundly. The trees are much more significant."

"Balls only," he said.

She laughed cynically.

Away beyond the landmark the thin stripes of the metal showed upon the railway track, whose margin was crowded with pale stacks of timber, beside which smoking toy engines flamed.

Then the silver lining of the canal lay as patches among the black heaps. Beyond, the dwellings, very dense on the river flat, looked like black, palisaded barbage, in thick rows and crowded beds, stretching right away, broken now and then by taller places, right nowhere the river glided in a hazy tinge across the country. The steep steep cliffs across the river looked queer. Great stretches of country darkened with trees and faintly brightened with even-leaved, spread towards the base, where the hills rose blue beyond grey.

"It is comforting," said Mrs. Daven, "to think the river goes no farther. It is only a little run upon the country yet."

"A little more," said Paul.

She shivered. She looked the town. Looking directly across at the country which was forbidden her, her impulsive face, pale and hostile, she reminded Paul of one of the silent, mournful angels.

"But the town's all right," he said; "it's only temporary. This is the crack, clumsy make-shift we've practiced on, till we find out what the idea is. The town will come all right."

The pigeons in the pockets of rock, among the pebbled bashes, seemed quarrelsome. To the left the large church of St. Mary rose into space, to keep close company with the Castle, above the heaped rubble of the town. Mrs. Daven smiled brightly as she looked across the country.

"I feel better," she said.

"Thank you," he replied. "Great compliment!"

"Oh, my brother!" she laughed.

"My? don't mauling back with the left hand what you give with the right, and no mistake," he said.

She laughed in amazement at him.

"But what was the matter with you?" he asked. "I know you were brooding something special. I can see the stamp of it on your face yet."

"I think I will not tell you," she said.

"All right, beg is," he answered.

She flushed and bit her lip.

"No," she said, "it was the girls."

"What about 'em?" Paul asked.

"They have been plotting something for a week now, and to-day they were particularly full of it. All alike; they hush me with their secrecy."

"Do they?" he asked in concern.

"I should not mind," she went on, in the restless, angry tone, "if they did not thrust it into my face—the fact that they have a secret."

"Just like women," said he.

"It is hateful, their faces glowing," she said intensely.

Paul was silent. He knew what the girls gloated over. He was sorry to be the cause of this new discussion.

"They can have all the secrets in the world," she went on, brooding bitterly; "but they might refrain from gloating in them, and making me feel more out of it than ever. It is—it is almost unbearable."

Paul thought for a few minutes. He was much perturbed.

"I will tell you what it's all about," he said, pale and nervous. "It's my birthday, and they've brought me a fine lot of presents, all the girls. They're jealous of you"—he felt her still as coldly as the word "jealous"—"merely because I sometimes bring you a book," he added slowly. "But, you see, it's only a trifle. Don't bother about it, will you—because"—he laughed quickly—"well, what would they say if they saw us here now, in spite of their victory?"

She was angry with him for his clumsy reference to their present intimacy. It was almost insolent of him. Yet he was so quiet, so forgiving him, although it cost her an effort.

Their two hands lay on the rough stone parapet of the Castle wall. He had inherited from his mother a fineness of mould, so that his hands were small and vigorous. Hers were large, to match her large limbs, but white and powerful looking. As Paul looked at them he knew her. "She is wanting somebody to take her hands—for all she is so contemptuous of us," he said to himself. And he saw nothing but his two hands, so warm and alive, which rested so fine for her. He was brooding now, staring out over the country from under sultry brows. The little, interesting diversity of shapes had vanished from the scene; all that remained was a vast, dark mass of sorrow and tragedy, the mass in all the houses and the river-bank and the people and the birds; they were only heaped differently. And now that the forms seemed to have slipped away, there remained the mass from which all the landscape was composed, a dark mass of struggle and pain. The factory, the girls, his mother, the large, upland church, the thicket of the town, merged into one amorphous—dark, brooding, and wonderful, every bit.

"Is that two o'clock striking?" Mrs. Dawes said in surprise.

Paul started, and everything springing into form, regained its vitality, its forgetfulness, and its cheerfulness.

They hurried back to work.

When he was in the rush of preparing for the night's post, transferring the work up from Fanny's room, which smelt of ironing, as evening postmen came in.

"'Mr. Paul Morel,' " he said smiling, handing Paul a package. " A lady's handiwork! Don't let the girls see it."

The postman, himself a favourite, was pleased to make fun of the girls' affection for Paul.

It was a volume of verse with a brief note: " You will allow me to send you this, and to quote me my inclinations. I also sympathise and wish you well.—G. D." Paul flushed hot.

" Good Lord! Mrs. Dawes. She can't afford it. Good Lord, who ever'd have thought it!"

He was suddenly intensely moved. He was filled with the warmth of her. In the glow he could almost feel her as if she were present—her arms, her shoulders, her bosom, see them, feel them, almost contain them.

This move on the part of Clara brought there into clear intimacy. The other girls noticed that when Paul met Mrs. Dawes his eyes filled and gave that peculiar bright gleaming which they could interpret. Knowing he was unsteady, Clara made no sign, save that occasionally she turned aside her face from him when he came upon her.

They walked out together very often at dinner-time; it was quite open, quite frank. Everybody seemed to feel that he was quite unaware of the state of his own feeling, and that nothing was wrong. He talked to her now with some of the old fervour with which he had talked to Miriam, but he cared less about the talk; he did not bother about his conclusions.

One day in October they went out to Lambley for tea. Suddenly they came to a halt on top of the hill. He climbed and sat on a gate, she sat on the stile. The afternoon was perfectly still, with a dim haze, and yellow shadows glowing through. They were quiet.

" How old were you when you married?" he asked quietly.

" Twenty-two."

Her voice was subdued, almost exclusive. She would tell him now.

" It is eight years ago?"

" Yes."

" And when did you leave him?"

" Three years ago."

" Five years! Did you love him when you married him?"

She was silent for some time, then she said slowly:

" I thought I did—more or less. I didn't think much about it. And he wanted me. I was very grateful then."

" And you sort of walked into it without thinking?"

" Yes. I seemed to have been asleep nearly all my life."

" Bonzambala? But—when did you wake up?"

"I didn't know that I ever did, or ever have—since I was a child."

"You went to sleep as you grew to be a woman? How queer! And he didn't wake you?"

"No; he never got there," she replied, in a whisper.

The brown birds dashed over the bridge where the rose-hips stood naked and scarlet.

"Got where?" he asked.

"At me. He never really passed to me."

The afternoon was so gently warm and dim. Red roofs of the cottages loomed among the blue haze. He loved the day. She could feel, but he could not understand, what Clara was saying.

"But why did you leave him? What he wanted to you?"

She shuddered lightly.

"He—the sort of degraded man. He wanted to bully me because he hadn't got me. And then I felt as if I wanted to run, as if I was flattered and bound up. And he seemed dirty."

"I see."

He did not at all see.

"And was he always dirty?" he asked.

"A bit," she replied slowly. "And then he seemed as if he couldn't get at me, really. And then he got brutal—he was brutal!"

"And why did you leave him finally?"

"Because—because he was unfaithful to me——"

They were both silent for some time. Her hand lay on the gatepost as she talked. He put his over it. His heart beat quickly.

"But did you—were you ever—did you ever give him a chance?"

"Chance? How?"

"To come near to you."

"I married him—and I was willing——"

They both strove to keep their voices steady.

"I believe he loves you," he said.

"It looks like it," she replied.

He wanted to take his hand away, and could not. She moved him by moving her own. After a silence, he began again:

"Did you leave him out of count all along?"

"He left me," she said.

"And I suppose he couldn't make himself mean everything to you?"

"He tried to bully me into it."

But the conversation had got them both out of their depth. Suddenly Paul jumped down.

"Come on," he said. "Let's go and get some tea."

They found a cottage, where they sat in the cold parlour. She poured out his tea. She was very quiet. He felt she had withdrawn again from him. After tea, she stared broadly into her tinsup, twisting her wedding ring all the time. In her abstraction she took the ring off her finger, stared it up, and spun it upon the table. The gold became a diaphanous, glimmering globe. It fell, and the ring was quivering upon the table. She spun it again and again. Fast watched, fascinated.

But she was a married woman, and he believed in simple friendship. And he considered that he was perfectly honourable with regard to her. It was only a friendship between man and woman, such as any civilized persons might have.

He was like so many young men of his own age. Sex had become so complicated in him that he would have denied that he ever could want Clara or Miriam or any woman whom he knew. Sex desire was a sort of detached thing, that did not belong to a woman. He loved Miriam with his soul. He grew warm at the thought of Clara, he battled with her, he knew the curves of her breast and shoulders as if they had been moulded inside him; and yet he did not positively desire her. He would have denied it for ever. He believed himself really bound to Miriam. If ever he should marry, some time in the far future, it would be his duty to marry Miriam. That he gave Clara to understand, and she said nothing, but left him in his course. He came to her, Mr. Dawes, whenever he could. Then he wrote frequently to Miriam, and visited the girl occasionally. So he went on through the winter; but he seemed not so fonded. His mother was kinder about him. She thought he was getting away from Miriam.

Miriam knew now how strong was the attraction of Clara for him; but still she was certain that the best in him would triumph. His feeling for him, Dawes—who, moreover, was a married man—was shallow and temporal, compared with his love for himself. He would come back to her, she was sure; with some of his young fireiness gone, perhaps, but cured of his desire for the lower things which other women than herself could give him. She could bear all if he were lawfully true to her and man came back.

He saw none of the severity of his position. Miriam was his old friend, lover, and she belonged to England and home and his youth. Clara was a newer friend, and she belonged to Hasting-ham, to life, to the world. It seemed to him quite plain.

Mrs. Dawes and he had many periods of coolness, when they saw little of each other; but they always came together again.

"Were you honest with Sister Dawes?" he asked her. It was a thing that seemed to trouble him.

"In what way?"

"Oh, I don't know. But wouldn't you be mad with him? Didn't you do something that knocked him to pieces?"

"What, pray?"

"Making him feel as if he were nothing—I know," Paul declared.

"You are so clever, my friend," she said coolly.

The conversation broke off there. But it made her cool with him for some time.

She very rarely saw Miriam now. The friendship between the two women was not broken off, but considerably weakened.

"Will you come in to the concert on Sunday afternoon?" Clara asked him just after Christmas.

"I promised to go up to Willey Farm," he replied.

"Oh, very well."

"You don't mind, do you?" he asked.

"Why should I?" she answered.

Which almost annoyed him.

"You know," he said, "Miriam and I have been a lot to each other ever since I was sixteen—that's seven years now."

"It's a long time," Clara replied.

"Yes; but somehow she—it doesn't go right——"

"How?" asked Clara.

"She seems to draw me and drive me, and she wouldn't leave a single hair of me free to fall out and blow away—she'd keep it."

"But you like to be kept."

"No," he said, "I don't. I wish it could be normal, give and take—like me and you. I want a woman to keep me, but not in her pocket."

"But if you love her, it couldn't be normal, like me and you."

"Yes; I should love her better than. She sort of wars me so much that I can't give myself."

"What's your law?"

"What's the real-out-of-my body. I can't help thinking back from her."

"And yet you love her!"

"No, I don't love her. I never even like her."

"Why not?" Clara asked.

"I don't know."

"I suppose you're afraid," she said.

I'm not. Something is run thinks from her like hell—she's as good, when I'm not good."

"How do you know what she is?"

"I do! I know she wants a sort of soul under."

"But how do you know what she wants?"

"I've been with her for seven years."

"And you haven't found out the very first thing about her?"

"What's that?"

"That she doesn't want any of your soul companions. That's your own imagination. She wants you."

He pondered over this. Perhaps he was wrong.

"But she seems——" he began.

"You've never tried," she answered.

The Test on Miriam

When the spring came again the old madness and haste. Now he knew he would have to go to Miriam. But what was his reluctance? He told himself it was only a sort of overmastering virginity in her and him which neither could break through. He might have married her; but his circumstances at home made it difficult, and, moreover, he did not want to marry. Marriage was for life, and because they had become close companions, he and she, he did not see that it should inevitably follow they should be man and wife. He did not feel that he wanted marriage with Miriam. He wished he did. He would have given his hand to have felt a joyous desire to marry her and to have her. Then why couldn't he bring it off? There was some obstacle; and what was the obstacle? It lay in the physical bondage. He struck from the physical contact. But why? With her he felt bound up inside himself. He could not go out to her. Something struggled in him, but he could not get to her. Why? She loved him. Clara said she even wanted him; does why couldn't he go to her, make love to her, kiss her? Why, when she put her arms in his, suddenly, as they walked, did he feel he would burst forth in brutality and revolt? He owed himself to her; he wanted to belong to her. Perhaps the revolt and the striking from her was love in its first fierce misdeed. He had no aversion for her. No, it was the appetite; it was a strong desire battling with a still stronger aversion and virginity. It seemed as if virginity were a positive force, which fought and won in both of them. And with her he felt it so hard to overcome; yet he was nearest to her, and with her alone could he deliberately break through. And he owed himself to her. Then, if they could get things right, they could marry; but he would never marry unless he could feel strong in the joy of it—even. He could not have faced his mother. It seemed to him that to sacrifice himself in a marriage he did not want would be degrading, and would undo all his life, make it a nullity. He would try what he could do.

And he had a great tenderness for Miriam. Always, she was sad, dressing her religious; and he was really a religion to her. He could not bear to fail her. It would all come right if they tried.

He looked round. A good many of the nicest men he knew were like himself, bound in by their own virginity, which they could not break out of. They were so sensitive to their women that they would go without them for ever rather than do them a hurt, an injustice. Being the sons of men whose husbands had blundered rather brutally through their feminine mistakes, they were themselves too diffident and shy. They could never deny themselves these ladies any reproach from a woman; for a woman, was like their mother, and they were full of the sense of their mother. They preferred themselves to suffer the misery of celibacy, rather than risk the other person.

He went back to her. Something in her, when he looked at her, brought the tears almost to his eyes. One day he stood behind her as she sang. Annie was playing a song on the piano. As Miriam sang her words seemed hopeless. She sang like a nun singing to heaven. It reminded him so much of the mouth and eyes of one who sings beside a *Doncetti Madonna*, so spiritual. Again, her as usual, came up the pain in him. Why must he ask her for the other thing? Why was there his blood battling with her? If only he could have been always gentle, tender with her, breathing with her the atmosphere of reveries and religious dreams, he would give his right hand. It was not fair to hurt her. There seemed no eternal residence about her; and when he thought of her mother, he saw the great brown eyes of a maiden who was nearly scared and shocked out of her virgin maidenhood, but not quite, in spite of her seven children. They had been born almost leaving her out of count, not of her, but upon her. So she could never let them go, because she never had possessed them.

Mrs. Wood saw him going again frequently to Miriam, and was surprised. He said nothing to his mother. He did not explain nor excuse himself. If he came home late, and she reproached him, he frowned and turned on her in an overbearing way.

"I shall come home when I like," he said; "I am old enough."

"Must she keep you all this time?"

"It is I who stay," he answered.

"And she lets you? But very well," she said.

And she went to bed, leaving the door unlocked for him; but she lay listening until he came, often long after. It was a great happiness to her, that he had gone back to Miriam. She recognized, however, the weakness of any further interference. He went to Willey Farm as a man now, not as a youth. She had no right over him. There was a coldness between him and her. He hardly told her anything. Discarded, she waited on him, cooked for him still,

and loved to slave for him; but her face closed again like a mask. There was nothing for her to do now but the housework; for all the rest he had given to Miriam. She could not forgive him. Miriam killed the joy and the warmth in him. He had been such a jolly lad, and full of the warmest affection; now he grew colder, more and more irritable and gloomy. It reminded her of William; but Fred was worse. He did things with more intensity, and more realisation of what he was about. His mother knew how he was suffering for want of a woman, and she saw him going to Miriam. If he had made up his mind, nothing on earth would alter him. Mrs. Morel was tired. She began to give up at last; she had finished. She was in the way.

He went on determinedly. He realised more or less what his mother felt. It only hardened his will. He made himself callous towards her; but it was like being callous to his own health. It undermined him quickly; yet he persisted.

He lay back in the rocking-chair at Willey Farm one evening. He had been talking to Miriam for some weeks, but had not come to the point. Now he said suddenly:

"I am twenty-four, almost."

She had been brooding. She looked up at him suddenly in surprise.

"Yes. What makes you say it?"

There was something in the changed atmosphere that she detected.

"Sir Thomas More says one can marry at twenty-four."

She laughed quietly, saying:

"Does it need Sir Thomas More's sanction?"

"No; but one ought to marry about then."

"Ay," she answered breezily; and she waited.

"I can't marry you," he continued slowly, "not now, because we've no money, and they depend on me at home."

She sat half-guessing what was coming.

"But I want to marry now——"

"You want to marry?" she repeated.

"A woman—you know what I mean."

She was silent.

"Now, at last, I must," he said.

"Ay," she answered.

"And you love me?"

She laughed bitterly.

"Why are you ashamed of it," he answered. "You wouldn't be ashamed before your God, why are you before people?"

"Nay," she answered deeply, "I am not ashamed."

she

"You are," he replied himself; "and it's my fault. But you know I can't help being—as I am—don't you?"

"I know you can't help it," she replied.

"I love you are useful too—then there is something short."

"Where?" she answered, looking at him.

"Oh, in me! It is I who ought to be ashamed—like a spiritual cripple. And I am ashamed. It is misery. Why is it?"

"I don't know," replied Miriam.

"And I don't know," he repeated. "Don't you think we have been too fierce in our what they call purity? Don't you think that to be so much afraid and severe is a sort of dishonesty?"

She looked at him with startled dark eyes.

"You recoiled away from anything of the sort, and I took the motion from you, and recoiled also, perhaps worse."

There was silence in the room for some time.

"Yes," she said, "it is so."

"There is between us," he said, "all these years of intimacy. I feel naked enough before you. Do you understand?"

"I think so," she answered.

"And you love me?"

She laughed.

"Don't be silly," he pleaded.

She looked at him and was sorry for him; his eyes were dark with sorrow. She was sorry for him; it was worse for him to have this deflected love than for himself, who could never be properly treated. He was restless, for ever aging forward and trying to find a way out. He might do as he liked, and have what he liked of her.

"No," she said softly, "I am not silly."

She felt she could bear anything for him; she would suffer for him. She put her hand on his knee as he leaned forward in his chair. He took it and kissed it; but it hurt to do so. He felt he was putting himself aside. He saw those sacrificed to her purity, which felt more like nullity. How could he kiss her hand passionately, when it would drive her away, and leave nothing but pain? Yet slowly he drew her to him and kissed her.

They knew each other too well to pretend anything. As she kissed him, she watched his eyes; they were staring across the room, with a peculiar dark blue in them that fascinated her. He was perfectly still. She could feel his heart throbbing heavily in his breast.

"What are you gazing about?" she asked.

The blue in his eyes struggled, became uncertain.

"I was thinking of the whole, I love you. I have been obstinate."

She sunk her head on his breast.

"Yes," she answered.

"That's all," he said, and his voice seemed sure, and his mouth was kissing her throat.

Then she raised her head and looked into his eyes with her full gaze of love. The blues struggled, seemed to try to get away from her, and then was quenched. He turned his head quickly aside. It was a moment of anguish.

"Kiss me," she whispered.

He shut his eyes, and kissed her, and his arms folded her close and close.

When she walked home with him over the fields, he said:

"I am glad I came back to you. I feel so simple with you—*as if there was nothing to hide. We will be happy!*"

"Yes," she murmured, and the tears came to her eyes.

"Some sort of poverty in our souls," he said. "nothing is our want, get away from, the very thing we want. We have to fight against that."

"Yes," she said, and she felt stung.

As she stood under the drooping thorn-tree, in the darkness by the roadside, he kissed her, and his fingers wandered over her face. In the darkness, where he could not see her but only feel her, his passion flooded him. He clasped her very close.

"Sometime you will have me?" he murmured, hiding his face on her shoulder. It was so difficult.

"Not now," she said.

His hopes and his heart sunk. A dizziness came over him.

"No," he said.

His clasp of her slackened.

"I have to feel your arm *there!*" she said, pressing his arm against her back, where it went round her waist. "It runs me on."

He tightened the pressure of his arm upon the small of her back to rest her.

"We belong to each other," he said.

"Yes."

"Then why shouldn't we belong to each other altogether?"

"But——" she faltered.

"I know it's a lot to ask," he said; "but there's not much right for you really—not in the Christian way. You can trust me *there!*"

"Oh, I can trust you." The answer came quick and strong.

"It's not that—it's not that at all—but——"

"What?"

She hid her face in his neck with a little cry of sleep.

"I don't know!" she cried.

THE TEST ON MIRIAM

She seemed slightly hysterical, but with a sort of horror. His heart died in him.

"You don't think it ugly?" he asked.

"No, not now. You have taught me it isn't."

"You are afraid?"

She calmed herself hastily.

"Yes, I am only afraid," she said.

He kissed her tenderly.

"Never mind," he said. "You shall please yourself."

Suddenly she gripped his arms round her, and clenched her fists stiff.

"You shall have me," she said, through her shut teeth.

His heart beat up again like fire. He kissed her close, and his mouth was on her throat. She could not bear it. She drew away. He disengaged her.

"Won't you be late?" she asked gently.

He laughed, scarcely hearing what she said. She waited, wishing he would go. At last he kissed her quickly and climbed the fence. Looking round he saw the pale bloom of her face down in the darkness under the hanging tree. There was no more of her but this pale bloom.

"Good-bye!" she called softly. She had no body, only a vest and a dim face. He turned away and ran down the road, his fists clenched; and when he came to the wall over the lake he leaned there, almost tremed, looking up the black water.

Miriam plunged home over the meadow. She was not afraid of people, what they might say; but she dreaded the hour with him. Yes, she would let him have her if he insisted; and then, when she thought of it afterwards, her head went down. He would be disappointed, he would find no satisfaction, and then he would go away. Yet he was so insistent; and over this, which did not seem so all-important to her, was their love to break down. After all, he was only like other men, seeking his satisfaction. Oh, but there was something more in him, something deeper! She could trust to it, in spite of all desires. He said that possession was a great moment in life. All strong emotions concentrated there. Perhaps it was so. There was something divine in it; then she would submit, religiously, to the sacrifice. He should have her. And at the thought her whole body clenched itself involuntarily, hard, as if against something; but Life forced her through this gate of suffering, too, and she would submit. As any rate, it would give him what he wanted, which was her deepest wish. She brooded and brooded and brooded herself towards weeping him.

He courted her now like a lover. Often, when he grew hot,

she put his face from her, held it between her hands, and looked in his eyes. He could not meet her gaze. Her dark eyes, full of love, earnest and searching, made him turn away. Now he was instant would she let him forget. Back again he had to torture himself into a sense of his responsibility and love. Never any relaxing, never any leaving himself to the great hunger and impersonality of passion; he must be brought back to a deliberate, selective creature. As if from a vision of passion she called him back to the lifesome, the personal relationship. He could not bear it. "Leave me alone—leave me alone!" he wanted to cry; but she wanted him to look at her with eyes full of love. His eyes, full of the dark, impersonal fire of desire, did not belong to her.

There was a great crop of cherries at the farm. The trees at the back of the house, very large and tall, hung thick with market and crimson drops, under the dark leaves. Paul and Edgar were gathering the fruit one evening. It had been a hot day, and now the clouds were rolling in the sky, dark and warm. Paul climbed high in the tree, above the eaves of the buildings. The wind, moaning wistfully, made the whole tree rock with a subtle, thrilling motion that almost the blood. The young man, perched insecurely in the slender branches, rocked till he felt slightly drunk, reached down the boughs, where the smaller heady cherries hung thick underneath, and tore off handful after handful of the dark, cool-fleshed fruit. Cherries touched his ears and his neck as he stretched forward, their chill finger-tips sending a shiver down his blood. All shades of red, from a golden vermilion to a rich crimson, gleamed and met his eyes under a darkness of leaves.

The sun, going down, suddenly caught the broken clouds. Immense piles of gold flared out in the south-west, leaped in soft, glowing yellow right up the sky. The world, till now dark and grey, reflected the gold glow, unmodified. Everywhere the trees, and the grass, and the far-off water, seemed raised from the twilight and shining.

Miriam came out wondering.

"Oh!" Paul heard her soft low voice call, "isn't it wonderful?"

He looked down. There was a faint gold gleam on her face, that looked very soft, turned up to him.

"How high you are!" she said.

Beside her, on the ratharh lawn, were four dead birds, shrikes that had been shot. Paul saw some cherry-stones hanging quite bleached, like skeletons, picked clear of flesh. He looked down again to Miriam.

"Clouds are on fire," he said.

"Beautiful!" she cried.

THE TRIF OF MIRIAM

She seemed so small, so soft, so tender, down there. He threw a handful of cherries at her. She was startled and frightened. He laughed with a low, crackling sound and poked her. She ran for shelter, picking up some cherries. Two fine red pairs she hung over her ears; then she looked up again.

"Haven't you got enough?" she asked.

"Nearly. It is like being on a ship up here."

"And how long will you stay?"

"While the sunset lasts."

She went to the fence and sat there, watching the gold clouds fall to pieces, and go to heaven, rose-coloured rain towards the darkness. Gold flamed to scarlet, like pain in its intense brightness. Then the scarlet sank to rose, and rose to crimson, and quickly the passion went out of the sky. All the world was dark grey. Paul scrambled quickly down with his basket, waving his champagne as he did so.

"They are lovely," said Miriam, fingering the cherries.

"I've torn my sleeve," he announced.

She took the three-cornered rag, saying:

"I shall have to mend it." It was near the shoulder. She put out her fingers through the tear. "How warm!" she said.

He laughed. There was a new, strange note in his voice, one that made her gasp.

"Shall we stay out?" he said.

"Won't it rain?" she asked.

"No, let us walk a little way."

They went down the fields and into the thick plantation of fir-trees and pines.

"Shall we go in among the trees?" he asked.

"Do you want to?"

"Yes."

It was very dark among the firs, and the sharp spines poked her face. She was afraid. Paul was alert and strong.

"I like the darkness," he said. "I wish it were thicker—good, thick darkness."

He seemed to be almost unaware of her as a person: she was only to him then a woman. She was afraid.

He stood against a pine-tree trunk and took her in his arms. She relinquished herself to him, but it was a sacrifice in which she felt something of horror. This thick-voiced, oblivious man was a stranger to her.

Later it began to rain. The pine-needles soaked very strong. Paul lay with his head on the ground, on the dead pine-needles, listening to the sharp hiss of the rain—a steady, keen noise. His

heart was down, very heavy. Now he realized that she had not been with him all the time, that her soul had stood apart, in a sort of horror. He was physically at rest, but no more. Very clumsy at heart, very sad, and very tender, his fingers wandered over her face pitifully. Now again she loved him deeply. He was tender and beautiful.

"The rain!" he said.

"Yes—it is raining on you?"

She put her hands over him, on his hair, on his shoulders, to feel if the raindrops fell on him. She loved him dearly. He, as he lay with his face on the dead pine-branches, felt extraordinarily quiet. He did not mind if the raindrops came on him: he would have him and get wet through: he felt as if nothing mattered, as if his living were insured away to the horizon, near and quite lovable. This strange, gentle reaching-out to death was new to him.

"We must go," said Miriam.

"Yes," he answered, but did not move.

To him now, life seemed a shadow, day a white shadowy night, and death, and silence, and inaction, this seemed like being. To be alive, to be urgent and insistent—that was strange. The highest of all was to melt out into the darkness and away there, identified with the great Being.

"The rain is coming in on us," said Miriam.

He rose, and smiled her,

"It is a pity," he said.

"What?"

"To have to go. I feel so still."

"Still?" she repeated.

"Sillier than I have ever been in my life."

He was walking with his hand in hers. She pressed his fingers, feeling a slight fear. Now he seemed beyond her; she had a fear lest she should lose him.

"The fir-trees are like processions on the darkness: each one only a presence."

She was afraid, and said nothing.

"A sort of hush: the whole night wondering and asleep; / suppose that's what we do in death—sleep in wonder."

She had been afraid before of the house in him: now of the mystic. She trod beside him in silence. The rain fell with a hurry "Hark!" on the trees. At last they gained the quiet sleep.

"Let us stay here awhile," he said.

There was a sound of rain *everywhere*, *unending everything*.

"I feel so strange and still," he said; "along with everything."

"Ay," she answered pathosly.

He nodded again unconscious of her, though he held her hand close.

"To be rid of our individuality, which is our will, which is our effort—to live effortless, a kind of conscious sleep—that is very beautiful, I think; that is our after-life—our immortality."

"Yes?"

"Yes—and very beautiful to have."

"You don't usually say that."

"No."

In a while they went indoors. Everybody looked at them curiously. He still kept the quiet, heavy look in his eyes, the softness in his voice. Immediately, they all left him alone.

About this time Miriam's grandmother, who lived in a tiny cottage in Woodlinton, fell ill, and the girl was sent to keep house. It was a beautiful little place. The cottage had a big garden in front, with red brick walls, against which the plum-trees were nailed. At the back another garden was separated from the fields by a tall old hedge. It was very pretty. Miriam had not much to do, so she found time for her beloved reading, and for visiting little landscape-pieces which interested her.

At the holiday-time her grandmother, being better, was driven to Dorby to stay with her daughter for a day or two. She was a crossbody old lady, and might return the second day or the third; so Miriam stayed alone in the cottage, which she pleased her.

Paul used often to cycle over, and they had as a rule peaceful and happy times. He did not embarrass her much; but then on the Monday of the holiday he was to spend a whole day with her.

It was perfect weather. He left his mother, telling her where he was going. She would be alone all the day. It rained a shadow over him; but he had three days that were all his own, when he was going to do as he liked. It was never so much through the morning lanes on his bicycle.

He got to the cottage at about eleven o'clock. Miriam was busy preparing dinner. She looked so perfectly in keeping with the little kitchen, tidy and busy. He kissed her and sat down to watch. The room was small and cozy. The sofa was covered all over with a sort of linen in squares of red and pale blue, old, much washed, but pretty. There was a stuffed seat in a case over a corner cupboard. The sunlight came through the leaves of the scented geranium in the window. She was cooking a chicken in his honour. It was their cottage for the day, and they were man and wife. He beat the eggs for her and peeled the potatoes. He thought she gave a feeling of home almost like his mother; and no one could look more beautiful, with her washed curls, when she was flushed from the fire.

The dinner was a great success. Like a young husband, he curved. They talked all the time with unflagging zest. Then he wiped the dishes she had washed, and they went out down the fields. There was a bright little brook that ran into a bog at the foot of a very steep bank. Here they wandered, picking wild a few marsh-marigolds and many big blue forget-me-nots. Then she sat on the bank with her hands full of flowers, mostly golden water-lilies. As she put her face down into the marigolds, it was all covered with a yellow stain.

"Your face is bright," he said, "like a transfiguration."

She looked at him, questioning. He laughed pleasantly to her, laying his hand on hers. Then he kissed her fingers, then her face.

The world was all stopped in sunshine, and quite still, yet not asleep, but quivering with a kind of expectancy.

"I have never seen anything more beautiful than this," he said. He held her fast all the time.

"And the water dripping to itself as it runs—do you love it?"

She looked at him, full of love. His eyes were very dark, very bright.

"Don't you think it's a great day?" he asked.

She murmured her assent. She was happy, and he saw it.

"And our day—just between us," he said.

They lingered a little while. Then they stood up upon the sweet sward, and he looked down at her simply.

"Will you marry?" he asked.

They went back to the house, hand-in-hand, in silence. The children came whispering down the path to her. He looked she down, and they had the little house to themselves.

He never forgot seeing her as she lay on the bed, when he was understanding his father. First he saw only her beauty, and was blind with it. She had the most beautiful body he had ever imagined. He stood unable to move or speak, looking at her, his face half smiling with wonder. And then he wanted her, but as he went forward to her, her hands lifted in a little pleading movement, and he looked at her face, and stopped. Her big brown eyes were watching him, still and unyielding and loving; she lay as if she had given herself up to sacrifice: there was her body for him; but the look at the back of her eyes, like a creature waiting immolation, arrested him, and all his blood fell back.

"You are sure you want me?" he asked, as if a cold shadow had come over him.

"Yes, quite sure."

She was very quiet, very calm. She only realized that she was doing something for him. He could hardly bear it. She lay as he

sacrificed for him because she loved him so much. And he had to sacrifice her. For a second, he wished he were motionless as death. Then he shut his eyes again to her, and his blood beat back again.

And afterwards he loved her—loved her to the last fibre of his being. He loved her. But he wanted, somehow, to cry. There was something he could not bear for her sake. He stayed with her all quiet hours at night. As he went home he felt he was deeply injured. He was a youth no longer. But why had he this dull pain in his soul? Why did the thought of death, the after-life, seem so sweet and consoling?

He spent the week with Miriam, and wore her out with his passion before it was gone. He had always, almost wildly, to put her out of view, and act from the brain strength of his own feelings. And he could not do it often, and there remained afterwards always the sense of failure and of death. If he really were with her, he had to put aside himself and his desire. If he would have her, he had to put her aside.

"When I come to you," he asked her, his eyes dark with pain and shame, "you don't really want me, do you?"

"Ah, yes!" she replied quickly.

He looked at her.

"Yes," he said.

She began to tremble.

"You see," she said, taking his face and shutting it out against her shoulder—"you see—as we are—how can I get used to you? It would come all right if we were married."

He tilted her head and looked at her.

"You mean, now, it is always too much shock?"

"Yes—always—"

"You are always clenched against me."

She was trembling with agitation.

"You see," she said, "I'm not used to the thought—"

"You are lucky," he said.

"But all my life. Mother said to me, 'There is one thing in marriage that is always dreadful, but you have to bear it.' And I believed it."

"And will believe," he said.

"No!" she cried harshly. "I believe, as you do, that feeling, even in this way, is the high-water mark of living."

"That doesn't alter the fact that you never want it."

"No," she said, taking his head in her arms and rocking in despair. "Don't say so! You don't understand!" She rocked with pain. "Don't I want your children?"

"But not me."

"How can you say so? But we must be married to his children——"

"Shall we be married, then? I want you to have my children. He kissed her hand recently. She pondered sadly, watched him.

"We are too young," she said at length.

"Twenty-four and twenty-three——"

"Not yet," she pleaded, as she rocked herself in distress.

"When you will," he said.

She bowed her head gravely. The tone of hopelessness in which he said these things grieved her deeply. It had always been failure between them. Tacitly, she acquiesced in what he did.

And after a week of love he said to his mother suddenly on Sunday night, just as they were going to bed:

"I shan't go so much to Miriam's, mother."

She was surprised, but she would not ask him anything.

"You please yourself," she said.

So he went to bed. But there was a quietness about him which she had wondered at. She almost guessed. She would leave him alone, however. Precipitation might spoil things. She watched him in his loneliness, wondering where he would end. He was sick, and much too quiet for him. There was a perpetual little twinkling of his brows, such as she had seen when he was a small baby, and which had been gone for many years. Now it was the same again. And she could do nothing for him. He had to go on alone, make his own way.

He continued faithful to Miriam. For one day he had loved her utterly. But it never came again. The sense of failure grew stronger. At first it was only a sadness. Then he began to feel he could not go on. He wanted to run, to go abroad, anything. Gradually he ceased to ask her to have him. Instead of drawing them together, it put them apart. And thus he realized, unconsciously, that it was no good. It was useless trying: it would never be a success between them.

For some months he had seen very little of Clara. They had occasionally walked out for half an hour at dinner-time. But he always reserved himself for Miriam. With Clara, however, his brow cleared, and he was gay again. She treated him indulgently, as if he were a child. He thought he did not mind. But deep below the surface it pained him.

Sometimes Miriam said:

"What about Clara? I hear nothing of her lately."

"I walked with her about twenty minutes yesterday," he replied.

"And what did she talk about?"

"I don't know. I suppose I did all the faking—I usually do. I think I was telling her about the strike, and how the women took it."

"Yes."

So he gave the account of himself.

But instinctively, without knowing it, the warmth he felt for Clara drew him away from Miriam, for whom he felt responsible, and to whom he felt he belonged. He thought he was being quite faithful to her. It was not easy to measure exactly the strength and warmth of one's feelings for a woman all they have run away with one.

He began to give more time to his men friends. There was Jump, at the Art School; Swain, who was chemistry demonstrator at the University; Newton, who was teacher; besides Edgar and Miriam's younger brothers. Pleasuring work, he sketched and studied with Joseph. He called in the University for Swain, and the two went "down town" together. Having come home in the train with Newton, he called and had a game of billiards with him in the Moon and Star. If he gave to Miriam the measure of his men friends, he felt quite justified. His mother began to be relieved. He always told her where he had been.

During the summer Clara wore sometimes a dress of soft cotton stuff with loose sleeves. When she lifted her hands, her sleeves fell back, and her beautiful strong arms showed out.

"Half a minute," he said. "Hold your arm still."

He made sketches of her hand and arm, and the drawings contained some of the fascination the real thing had for him. Miriam, who always went scrupulously through his books and papers, saw the drawings.

"I think Clara has such beautiful arms," he said.

"Yes. When did you draw them?"

"On Tuesday, in the work-room. You know, I've got a corner where I can work. Often I can do every single thing they need in the department, before dinner. Then I work for myself in the afternoon, and just use to things at night."

"Yes," she said, turning the leaves of his sketch-book.

Frequently he hated Miriam. He hated her as she bent forward and pored over his things. He hated her way of persistently seeing him up, as if he were an endless psychological museum. When he was with her, he hated her for having got him, and yet not got him, and he tortured her. She took all and gave nothing, he said. At least, she gave no living warmth. She was never alive, and giving off life. Looking for her was like looking for something which did not exist. She was only his conscience, not his mate.

He hated her violently, and was more cruel to her. They dragged on till the next morning. He saw more and more of Clara.

At last he spoke. He had been sitting working at home one evening. There was between him and his mother a peculiar condition of people frantically finding fault with each other. Mrs. Morel was strong on her feet again. He was not going to rich relations. Very well; then she would stand stout till he said something. It had been coming a long time, this haunting of the storm in him, when he would come back to her. This evening doctor was between them a peculiar condition of suspense. He waited feverishly and mechanically, so that he could escape from himself. It grew late. Through the open door, stealthily, came the scent of madonnas like, almost as if it were proceeding abroad. Suddenly he got up and went out of doors.

The beauty of the night made him want to shout. A half-grown, dusky gold, was flicking behind the black cypresses at the end of the garden, making the sky dull purple with its glow. Nearer, a thin white fence of lilacs went across the garden, and the air all round seemed to stir with roses, as if it were alive. He went across the bed of pink, whose horn perfumes came sharply across the roiling, heavy scent of the lilies, and stood alongside the white border of flowers. They fogged all round, as if they were panting. The roses made him drunk. He went down to the field to watch the moon sink under.

A cornrake in the haystack called inwardly. The moon slid quite quickly downwards, growing more faded. Behind him the great flowers leaved as if they were calling. And then, like a shock, he caught another perfume, something rare and coarse. Hunting round, he found the purple lilies, touched their fleshy throats and their dark, grasping hands. At any rate, he had found something. They stood still in the darkness. Their scent was brutal. The moon was melting down upon the crest of the hill. It was gone; all was dark. The cornrake called still.

Breaking off a pick, he suddenly went indoors.

"Come, my boy," said his mother. "I'm sure it's time you were to bed."

He stood with the pick against his lips.

"I shall break it off with Miriam, mother," he answered calmly.

She looked at him over her spectacles. He was staring back at her, unsmiling. She met his eyes for a moment, then took off her glasses. He was white. The male was up in him, dominant. She did not want to see him too clearly.

"But I thought——" she began.

THE TEST OF MIRIAM

"Well," he answered, "I don't love her. I don't want to marry her—so I shall have done."

"But," exclaimed his mother, amazed, "I thought long you had made up your mind to have her, and so I said nothing."

"I had—I wanted to—but now I don't want. It's no good. I shall break off on Sunday. I ought to, wouldn't I?"

"You know best. You know I said so long ago."

"I can't help that now. I shall break off on Sunday."

"Well," said his mother, "I think it will be best. But long I decided you had made up your mind to have her, so I said nothing, and should have said nothing. But I say as I have always said, I don't think she is suited to you."

"On Sunday I break off," he said, smiling the while. He put the flower in his mouth. Unfobking, he tore the teeth, closed them on the blossom slowly, and had a mouthful of petals. These he spat into the fire, kissed his mother, and went to bed.

On Sunday he went up to the farm in the early afternoon. He had written Miriam that they would walk over the field to Hadcroft. His mother was very tender with him. He said nothing, but she saw the effort it was costing. The peculiar set look on his face told her.

"Never mind, my son," she said. "You will be so much better when it is all over."

Paul glanced swiftly at his mother in surprise and discontent. He did not want sympathy.

Miriam met him at the lancelaid. She was sewing a new dress of figured muslin that had short sleeves. Those short sleeves, and Miriam's brown-stained arms beneath them—such puffed, ruffled arms—gave him so much pain that they helped to make him cruel. She had made herself look so beautiful and fresh for him. She seemed to blossom for him alone. Every time he looked at her—a mature young woman now, and beautiful in her new dress—he hurt so much that his heart seemed almost to be burning with the restraint he put on it. But he had decided, and it was irrevocable.

On the hills they sat down, and he lay with his head in her lap, while she fingered his hair. She knew that "he was not there," as she put it. Often, when she had him with her, she looked for him, and could not find him. But this afternoon she was not prepared.

It was nearly five o'clock when he told her. They were sitting on the bank of a stream, where the lip of turf hung over a hollow bank of yellow earth, and he was looking away with a sick, as he did when he was perturbed and cruel.

"I have been thinking," he said, "we ought to break off."

"Why?" she asked in surprise.

"Because it's no good going on."

"Why is it no good?"

"It isn't. I don't want to marry. I don't want ever to marry. And if we're not going to marry, it's no good going on."

"But why do you say this now?"

"Because I've made up my mind."

"And what about those last few months, and the things you told me then?"

"I can't help it; I don't want to go on."

"You don't want any more of me?"

"I want us to break off—you be free of me, I free of you."

"And what about those last months?"

"I don't know. I've not told you anything but what I thought was true."

"Then why are you different now?"

"I'm not—I'm the same—only I know it's no good going on."

"You haven't told me why it's no good."

"Because I don't want to go on—and I don't want to marry."

"How many times have you offered to marry me, and I wouldn't?"

"I know; but I want us to break off."

There was silence for a moment or two, while he dug viciously at the earth. She bent her head, pondering. He was an unreasonable child. He was like an infant which, when it has drunk its fill, throws away and smashes the cup. She looked at him, feeling she could get hold of him and wring some consistency out of him. But she was helpless. Then she cried:

"I have said you were only fourteen—you are only *four*!"

He still dug at the earth viciously. He heard.

"You are a *child of four*," she repeated in her anger.

He did not answer, but said in his heart: "All right; if I'm a child of four, what do you want me for? I don't want another mother." But he said nothing to her, and there was silence.

"And have you told your people?" she asked.

"I have told my mother."

There was another long interval of silence.

"Then what do you want?" she asked.

"Why, I want us to separate. We have lived on each other all these years; now let us stop. I will go my own way without you, and you will go your way without me. You will have an independent life of your own then."

There was in it some truth that, in spite of her bitterness, she

could not help registering. She knew she felt in a sort of bondage to him, which she hated because she could not control it. She had hated her love for him from the moment it grew too strong for her. And, deep down, she had hated him because she loved him and he dominated her. She had resisted his domination. She had sought to keep herself free of him in the last hour. And she was free of him, even more than he of her.

"And," he continued, "we shall always be more or less each other's work. You have done a lot for me, I for you. Now let us start and live by ourselves."

"What do you want to do?" she asked.

"Nothing—only be free," he answered.

She, however, knew in her bones that Clara's influence was over him to liberate him. But she said nothing.

"And what have I to tell my mother?" she asked.

"I told my mother," he answered, "that I was breaking off—clean and altogether."

"I shall not tell them at home," she said.

Frowning, "You please yourself," he said.

He knew he had landed her in a nasty hole, and was leaving her in the lurch. It angered him.

"Tell them you wouldn't and won't marry me, and have broken off," he said. "It's true enough."

She bit her finger outside. She thought over their whole affair. She had known it would come to this; she had seen it all along. It dawned with her bitter expectation.

"Always—it has always been so!" she cried. "It has been not long battle between us—you fighting away from me!"

It came from her unconscious, like a flash of lightning. The man's heart stood still. Was this how she saw it?

"But we've had some perfect hours, some perfect days, when we were together!" he pleaded.

"Never!" she cried; "never! It has always been you fighting me off!"

"Not always—yes at first!" he pleaded.

"Always, from the very beginning—always the same!"

She had finished, but she had done enough. He was agitated. He had wanted to say, "It has been good, but it is an end." And she—she whose love he had believed in when he had despised himself—declared that their love had ever been love. "He had always fought away from her?" Then it had been conscious. There had never been anything really between them; all the time he had been imagining something where there was nothing. And she had known. She had known so much, and had told him so

little. She had known all the time. All the time this was at the bottom of her!

He sat silent in bitterness. At last the whole affair appeared in a central aspect to him. She had really played with him, not he with her. She had hidden all her condemnation from him, had flattered him, and despised him. She despised him now. He grew intellectual and cruel.

"You ought to marry a man who worships you," he said; "then you could do as you liked with him. Plenty of men will worship you, if you get on the private side of their nature. You ought to marry one such. They would never fight you off."

"Thank you!" she said. "But don't advise me to marry someone else any more. You've done it before."

"Very well," he said; "I will say no more."

He sat still, feeling as if he had had a blow, instead of giving one. Their eight years of friendship and love, the eight years of his life, were nullified.

"When did you think of this?" she asked.

"I thought definitely on Thursday night."

"I knew it was coming," she said.

That pleased him bitterly. "Oh, very well! If she knew then it doesn't come as a surprise to her," he thought.

"And have you said anything to Clara?" she asked.

"No; but I shall tell her now."

There was a silence.

"Do you remember the things you said this time last year, in my grandfather's house—say last month even?"

"Yes," he said; "I do! And I meant them! I can't help that it's failed."

"It has failed because you want something else."

"It would have failed whether or not. I've never believed in me."

She laughed strangely.

He sat in silence. He was full of a feeling that she had deceived him. She had despised him when he thought she worshipped him. She had let him say wrong things, and had not contradicted him. She had let him fight alone. But it struck in his throat that she had despised him whilst he thought she worshipped him. She should have told him when she found fault with him. She had not played fair. He hated her. All these years she had treated him as if he were a hero, and thought of him secretly as an infant, a foolish child. Then why had she left the foolish child to his folly? His heart was hard against her.

She sat full of bitterness. She had known—oh, well she had

known! All the time he was away from her she had nursed him up, with his illnesses, his symptoms, and his folly. Even she had guarded her soul against him. She was not overthrown, not penetrated, not even much hurt. She had known. Only why, as he sat there, had he still this strange dominance over her? His very movements fascinated her as if she were hypnotized by him. Yet he was despicable, false, incoherent, and mean. Why this bondage for her? Why was it the movement of his arm stirred her as nothing else in the world could? Why was she fastened to him? Why, even now, if he looked at her and commanded her, would she have to obey? She would obey him in his trifling commands. But once he was obeyed, then she had him in her power, she knew, to lead him where she would. She was sure of herself. Only, this new influence! Ah, he was not a man! He was a baby that cries for the sweetest toy. And all the attachments of his soul would not keep him. Very well, he would have to go. But he would come back when he had tired of his new sensation.

He looked at the earth till she was forced to speak. She rose. He sat flinging lumps of earth in the stream.

"We will go and have tea here?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered.

They chattered over irrelevant subjects during tea. He told Sarah on the love of ornament—the cottage parlour moved him thereto—and its connection with seduction. She was cold and quiet. As they walked home, she asked:

"And we shall not see each other?"

"No—no surely," he answered.

"Not write?" she asked, almost sarcastically.

"As you will," he answered. "We're not strangers—neither should be, whatever happened. I will write to you now and again. You please yourself."

"I see!" she answered satirically.

But he was at that stage at which nothing else hurts. He had made a great cleavage in his life. He had had a great shock when she had told him their love had been always a conflict. Nothing more remained. If it never had been such, there was no need to make a fact that it was ended.

He left her at the lane-end. As she went home, solitary, in his new flock, having her people to face at the other end, he stood still with shame and pain in the highroad, thinking of the suffering he caused her.

In the reaction towards restoring his self-esteem, he went into the Willow Tree for a drink. There were four girls who had been out for the day, drinking a modest glass of port. They had some

chocolate on the table. Paul sat near with his whisky. He noticed the girls whispering and nudging. Presently one, a heavy dark husky, turned to him and said:

"Have a chocolate?"

The other laughed loudly at her impudence.

"All right," said Paul. "Give me a hard one—*not*. I don't like cream."

"Here you are, then," said the girl; "here's an almond for you."

She held the sweet between her fingers. He opened his mouth. She popped it in, and blushed.

"You are nice!" he said.

"Well," she answered, "we thought you looked overcast, and they dared me offer you a chocolate."

"I don't mind if I have another—another one," he said.

And presently they were all laughing together.

It was nine o'clock when he got home, falling drunk. He entered the house in silence. His mother, who had been waiting, rose anxiously.

"I told her," he said.

"I'm glad," replied the mother, with great relief.

He hung up his cap wearily.

"I said we'd have done altogether," he said.

"That's right, my son," said the mother. "It's hard for her now, but here in the long run. I know. You weren't suited for her."

He laughed shakily as he sat down.

"I've had such a luck with some girls in a jolt," he said.

His mother looked at him. He had forgotten Miriam now. He told her about the girls in the Willow Tree. Mrs. Mused looked at him. It seemed unreal, his gaiety. At the back of it was too much horror and misery.

"Now have some supper," she said very gently.

Afterwards he said vindictively:

"She never thought she'd have me, mother, not from the first, and so she's not disappointed."

"I'm afraid," said his mother, "she doesn't give up hopes of you yet."

"No," he said, "perhaps not."

"You'll find it's better to have done," she said.

"I don't know," he said desperately.

"Well, leave her alone," replied his mother.

So he left her, and she was alone. Very few people cared for her, and she for very few people. She remained alone with herself, waiting.

Parron

He was gradually making it possible to earn a livelihood by his art. Library's had taken several of his painted designs on various stuffs, and he could sell designs for embroidery, the like-stuffs, and similar things, in one or two places. It was not very much he made at present, but he might amend it. He had also made friends with the designer for a pottery firm, and was gaining some knowledge of his new acquaintance's art. The applied arts interested him very much. At the same time he laboured slowly at his pictures. He loved to paint large figures, full of light, but not merely made up of light and cast shadows, like the impressionists: rather delicate figures that had a certain luminous quality, like some of Michael Angelo's people. And these he fitted into a landscape, in what he thought true proportion. He worked a great deal from memory, using everybody he knew. He laboured freely in his work, that it was good and valuable. In spite of fits of depression, shrinking, everything, he believed in his work.

He was twenty-four when he said his first confident thing to his mother.

"Mother," he said, "I'll make a painter that they'll stand to."

She smiled in her quiet fashion. It was like a half-ploated drag of the shoulders.

"Very well, my boy, we'll see," she said.

"You shall see, my pigeon! You see if you're not wacky one of these days!"

"I'm quite content, my boy," she smiled.

"But you'll have to alter. Look at you with Minnie!"

Minnie was the small screen, a girl of fourteen.

"And what about Minnie?" asked Mrs. Moor, with dignity.

"I heard her this morning: 'Oh, Mrs. Moor! I was going to do that,' when you went out in the rain for some coal," he said.

"That looks a lot like your being able to manage servants!"

"Well, it was only the child's niceness," said Mrs. Moor.

"And you springing to her: 'You can't do two things at once, can you?'"

"She was busy washing up," replied Mrs. Morel.

"And what did she say? 'It could very have waited a bit. Now look how your feet puddle!'"

"You—brave young baggage!" said Mrs. Morel, smiling.

He looked at his mother, laughing. She was quite warm and rosy again with loss of him. It seemed as if all the sunshine were on her for a moment. He continued his work gladly. She seemed so well when she was happy that he forgot her grey hair.

And that year she went with him to the Isle of Wight for a holiday. It was too rushing for these books, and so beautiful. Mrs. Morel was full of joy and wonder. But he would have her walk with him more than she was able. She had a bad fainting bout. So grey her face was, so blue her mouth! It was agony to him. He felt as if someone were pushing a bolt in his chest. Then she was better again, and he forgot. But the anxiety remained inside him, like a wound that did not close.

After leaving Miriam he went almost straight to Clara. On the Monday following the day of the capture he went down to the work-room. She looked up at him and smiled. They had grown very intimate unreason. She now a new brightness about him.

"Well, Queen of Sheba!" he said, laughing.

"But why?" she asked.

"I think it suits you. You've got a new back on."

She flushed, smiling.

"And what of it?"

"Suits you—awfully! I could design you a dress."

"How would it be?"

He stood in front of her, his eyes glittering as he responded. He kept her eyes fixed with his. Then suddenly he took hold of her. She half started back. He drew the stuff of her blouse tighter, smoothed it over her breast.

"More of!" he explained.

But they were back of their flaring with Miriam, and immediately he ran away. He had touched her. His whole body was quivering with the sensation.

There was already a sort of secret understanding between them. The next evening he went into the cinematograph with her for a few minutes before tea-time. As they sat, he saw her hand lying near him. For some moments he dared not touch it. The pictures danced and distorted. Then he took her hand in his. It was large and strong. It filled his grasp. He held it fast. She neither moved nor made any sign. When they came out his train was done. He hastened.

"Good-night," she said. He darted away across the road.

The next day he came again, talking to her. She was rather superior with him.

"Shall we go a walk on Monday?" he asked.

She turned her face aside.

"Shall you tell Miriam?" she replied sarcastically.

"I have broken off with her," he said.

"When?"

"Last Sunday."

"You quarrelled?"

"No! I had made up my mind. I told her quite definitely I should consider myself free."

Clara did not answer, and he returned to his work. She was so quiet and so superior!

On the Saturday evening he asked her to come and drink coffee with him in a restaurant, meeting him after work was over. She came, looking very nervous and very distant. He had three-quarters of an hour to train-stem.

"We will walk a little while," he said.

She agreed, and they went past the Castle into the Park. He was afraid of her. She walked moodily at his side, with a kind of restless, reluctant, angry walk. He was afraid to take her hand.

"Which way shall we go?" he asked as they walked in darkness.

"I don't mind."

"Then we'll go up the steps."

He suddenly turned round. They had passed the Park steps. She stood still in resentment of his suddenly abandoning her. He looked for her. She stood aloof. He caught her suddenly in his arms, held her strained for a moment, kissed her. Then let her go.

"Come along," he said, persistent.

She followed him. He took her hand and kissed her finger-tips. They went in silence. When they came to the light, he let go her hand. Neither spoke till they reached the station. Then they looked each other in the eyes.

"Goodnight," she said.

And he went for his train. His body acted mechanically. People talked to him. He heard voices without answering them. He was in a delirium. He felt that he would go mad if Monday did not come at once. On Monday he would see her again. All himself was pitched there, ahead. Sunday intervened. He could not bear it. He could not see her till Monday. And Sunday intervened—hour after hour of tension. He wanted to beat his head against the door of the carriage. But he was stiff. He drank some whisky on the way home, but it only made it worse. His

mother must not be upset, that was all. He dismounted, and got quickly to bed. There he sat, dazed, with his chin on his knees, staring out of the window at the far hill, with its few lights. He neither thought nor slept, but sat perfectly still, staring. And when at last he was so cold that he came to himself, he found his watch had stopped at half-past two. It was after three o'clock. He was exhausted, but still there was the comfort of knowing it was only Sunday morning. He went to bed and slept. Then he cycled all day long, till he was fagged out. And he scarcely knew where he had been. But the day after was Monday. His days all four o'clock. Then he lay and thought. He was coming nearer to himself—he could see himself, still, somewhere in dream. She would go a walk with him in the afternoon. Afternoon! Dreamed years ahead.

Slowly the hours creased. His father got up; he heard him, getting about. Then the motor set off to the pit, his heavy boots strapping the park. Cinders were still swirling. A cart went down the road. His mother got up. She knocked the fire. Presently she called him softly. He answered as if he were asleep. This shall of himself do well.

He was walking to the station—another mile. The train was near Nottingham. Would it stop before the tunnel? But it did not matter; it would get there before dinner-time. He was at Jordan's. She would come in half an hour. At any rate, she would be near. He had done the letters. She would be there. Perhaps she had not come. He ran downstairs. Ah! he saw her through the glass door. Her shoulders stooping a little to her work made him feel he could not go forward; he could not stand. He went in. He was pale, nervous, awkward, and quite cold. Would she understand him? He could not write his real self with this shell.

"And this afternoon," he struggled to say. "You will come?"

"I think so," she replied, murmuring.

He stood before her, unable to say a word. She hid her face from him. Again came over him the feeling that he would lose consciousness. He set his teeth and went upstairs. He had done everything correctly yet, and he would do so. All the morning things seemed a long way off, as they do to a man under duress-form. He himself seemed under a tight band of constraint. Then there was his other self, in the distance, doing things, entering stuff in a ledger, and he watched that far-off him carefully to see he made no mistake.

But the ache and strain of it could not go on much longer. He worked incessantly. Still it was only twelve o'clock. As if he had

rolled his clothing against the desk, he stood there and worked, forcing every stroke out of himself. It was a quarter to one; he could clear away. Then he ran downstairs.

"You will meet me at the Fountain at two o'clock," he said.

"I can't be there till half-past."

"Yes!" he said.

She saw his dark sad eyes.

"I will try at a quarter past."

And he had to be content. He went and got some dinner. All the time he was still under childhood, and every minute was stretched out indefinitely. He walked miles of paven. Then he thought he would be late at the meeting-place. He was at the Fountain at five past one. The course of the next quarter of an hour was defined beyond expression. It was the anguish of combining the living self with the ideal. Then he saw her. She came! And he was there.

"You are late," he said.

"Only five minutes," she answered.

"I'd never have done it to you," he laughed.

She was in a dark blue costume. He looked at her beautiful figure.

"You want some flowers," he said, going to the nearest florist.

She followed him in silence. He brought her a bunch of scarlet, helix-red carnations. She put them in her coat, flushing.

"That's a fine colour!" he said.

"I'd rather have had something softer," she said.

He laughed.

"Do you feel like a blot of vermilion walking down the street?" he said.

She hung her head, afraid of the people they met. He looked sideways at her as they walked. There was a wonderful close down on her face near the ear that he wanted to touch. And a certain heaviness, the heaviness of a very full ear of corn that dips slightly in the wind, that there was about her, inside his brain spin. He seemed to be spinning down the street, everything going round.

As they sat in the tramcar, she leaned her heavy shoulders against him, and he took her hand. He felt himself coming round from the anaesthetic, beginning to breathe. Her ear, half-hidden among her blonde hair, was near to him. The temptation to kiss it was almost too great. But there were other people on top of the car. It still remained to him to kiss it. After all, he was not himself, he was some attribute of her, like the sunshine that fell on her.

He looked quickly away. It had been raining. The big bluff of the Castle rock was streaked with rain, as it soared above the

flat of the town. They crossed the wide, black space of the Midland Railway, and passed the circle enclosure that stood out white. Then they ran down wooded Wilford Road.

She rocked slightly to the man's motion, and as she leaned against him, rocked upon him. He was a vigorous, slender man, with educationless energy. His face was rough, with rough-hewn features, like the common people's; but his eyes under the deep brows were so full of life that they fascinated her. They seemed to dance, and yet they were still, trembling on the finest balance of laughter. His mouth the same was just going to spring into a laugh of triumph, yet did not. There was a sharp suspense about him. She bit her lip moodily. His hand was hard clenched over hers.

They paid their two halfpennies at the turnstile and crossed the bridge. The Train was very full. It swept silent and trackless under the bridge, travelling to a soft body. There had been a great deal of rain. On the river banks were flat gleams of flood water. The sky was grey, with gleams of silver here and there. In Wilford Churchyard the dabbles were gilded with rain—wet black-crimson balls. No one was on the path that went along the green river meadow, along the elm-tree colonnade.

There was the silverst haze over the silvery-dark water and the green meadow-banks, and the daisies that were spangled with gold. The dew did by in a body, utterly silent and red, intertwining among itself like some subtle, complex organism. Clara walked moodily beside him.

"Why," she asked at length, in rather a jarring tone, "did you leave Miriam?"

He frowned.

"Because I wanted to leave her," he said.

"Why?"

"Because I didn't want to go on with her. And I didn't want to marry."

She was silent for a moment. They picked their way down the muddy path. Drops of water fell from the elm-trees.

"You didn't want to marry Miriam, or you didn't want to marry at all?" she asked.

"Both," he answered—"both."

They had to maneuver to get to the stile, because of the pools of water.

"And what did she say?" Clara asked.

"Miriam? She said I was a baby of four, and that I always had hated her still."

Clara pondered over this for a time.

"But you have really been going with her for some time?" she asked.

"Yes."

"And now you don't want any more of her?"

"No. I know it's no good."

She pondered again.

"Don't you think you've treated her rather badly?" she asked.

"Yes; I ought to have dropped it years back. But it would have been no good going on. Two wrongs don't make a right."

"How old are you?" Clara asked.

"Twenty-five."

"And I am thirty," she said.

"I know you are."

"I shall be thirty-one—or am I thirty-one?"

"I neither know nor care. What does it matter?"

They went at the entrance to the Grove. The wet, red track, already sticky with fallen leaves, went up the steep bank between the grass. On either side stood the elm-trees like pillars along a great aisle, arching over and making high up a roof from which the dead leaves fell. All was empty and silent and wet. She stood on top of the stile, and he held both her hands. Laughing, she looked down into his eyes. Then she leaped. Her breast came against his; he held her, and covered her face with kisses.

They went on up the slippery, steep red path. Presently she released his hand and put it round her waist.

"You press the vein of my arm, holding it so tightly," she said.

They walked along. His finger-tips felt the rocking of her breast. All was silent and deserted. On the left the red wet plough-land showed through the doorways between the elm-trees and their branches. On the right, looking down, they could see the tree-tops of elms growing far beneath them, hear occasionally the gurgle of the river. Sometimes there below they caught glimpses of the fall, soft-sliding Trent, and of water-cressets daint with small scales.

"It has scarcely altered since little Katie White used to come," he said.

But he was watching her throat below the ear, where the flesh was hanging into the honey-white, and her mouth that parted Almond-like. She turned against him as she walked, and his body was like a bent sailing.

Half-way up the big colonnade of elms, where the Grove rose highest above the river, their forward movement faltered to an end. He led her across to the grass, under the trees at the edge of the park. The cliff of red earth sloped restfully down, through trees

and bushes, in the river that glistened and was dark between the foliage. The far-below water-meadows were very green. He and the wood leaning against one another, silent, afraid, their bodies touching all along. There came a quick gurgie from the river below.

"Why," he asked at length, "did you hate Master Dawson?"

She turned to him with a splendid movement. Her mouth was opened him, and her throat; her eyes were half shut; her breast was lifted as if it asked for him. He flushed with a small laugh, shut his eyes, and cast her in a long, whole kiss. Her mouth fused with his; their bodies were sealed and annealed. It was some minutes before they withdrew. They were standing beside the public path.

"Will you go down to the river?" he asked.

She looked at him, leaving herself in his hands. He went over the hump of the declivity and began to climb down.

"It is slippery," he said.

"Never mind," she replied.

The red clay went down almost sheer. He did, went from one tuft of grass to the next, hanging on to the bushes, making for a little platform at the foot of a tree. There he waited for her, laughing with excitement. Her shoes were clogged with red earth. It was hard for her. He frowned. At last he caught her hand, and she stood beside him. The cliff rose above them and fell away below. Her colour rose up, her eyes flashed. He looked at the big drop below them.

"It's risky," he said; "or messy, at any rate. Shall we go back?"

"Not for my sake," she said quietly.

"All right. You see, I can't help you; I should only hinder. Give me that little parcel and your gloves. Your poor shoes!"

They stood packed on the flat of the declivity, under the trees.

"Well, I'll go again," he said.

Away he went, slipping, staggering, sliding to the next tree, into which he fell with a slam that nearly shook the breath out of him. She came after cautiously, hanging on to the twigs and gnarls. So they descended, stage by stage, to the river's brink. There, to his disgust, the flood had eaten away the path, and the red declivity ran straight into the water. He dug to his heels and brought himself up violently. The string of the parcel broke with a snap; the brown parcel bounded down, leaped into the waves, and sailed smoothly away. He hung on to his tree.

"Well, I'll be damned!" he cried loudly. Then he laughed. She was coming precariously down.

"Mia!!" he warned her. He stood with his back to the tree, waiting. "Come now," he called, opening his arms.

She let herself run. He caught her, and together they stood watching the dark water sweep at the near edge of the bank. The parcel had sailed out of sight.

"It doesn't matter," she said.

He held her close and kissed her. There was only room for their four feet.

"It's a wonder!" he said. "But there's a net where a man has been, so if we go on I guess we shall find the path again."

The river did and reined in great volume. On the other bank cattle were feeding on the dusky flats. The cliff rose high above Paul and Clara on their right hand. They stood against the tree in the weary silence.

"Let us try going forward," he said; and they struggled in the red clay along the groove a man's naked foot had made. They were hot and flushed. Their hardened shoes hung heavy on their feet. At last they found the broken path. It was lined with rubble from the water, but at any rate it was easier. They cleared their boots with ropes. His heart was beating thick and fast.

Suddenly, coming on to the bank level, he saw two figures of men standing silent at the water's edge. His heart leaped. They were fishing. He turned and put his hand up warningly to Clara. She hesitated, buttoned her coat. The two went on together.

The fishermen turned continually to watch the two intruders on their privacy and solitude. They had had a fire, but it was nearly out. All kept perfectly still. The men turned again to their fishing, stood over the grey glistening river like statues. Clara went with bowed head, flushing; he was laughing to himself. Directly they passed out of sight behind the willows.

"Now they ought to be drowned," said Paul softly.

Clara did not answer. They rolled forward along a dry path on the river's lip. Suddenly it vanished. The bank was sheer red solid clay in front of them, sloping straight into the river. He stood and crouched beneath his branch, reading his work.

"It is impossible!" said Clara.

He stood erect, looking round. Just ahead were two lines in the stream, covered with alders. But they were unobtainable. The cliff came down like a sloping wall from far above their heads. Behind, not far back, were the fishermen. Across the river the distant cattle fed silently in the dusky afternoon. He croued again deeply under his branch. He gazed up the great steep bank. Was there no hope but to walk back to the public path?

"Stop a minute," he said, and, digging his heels sideways into

the steep bank of red clay, he began slowly to mount. He looked across at every cross-bow. At last he found what he wanted. Two beach-rooms side by side on the hill held a little level on the upper face between their roof. It was littered with damp leaves, but it would do. The fishermen were perhaps sufficiently out of sight. He threw down his raincoat and waved to her to come.

She totted to his side. Arriving there, she looked at him heavily, dumbly, and laid her head on his shoulder. He held her fast as he looked around. They were safe enough from all but the small, lonely ones over the shore. He sunk his mouth on her throat, where he felt her heavy pulse beat under his lips. Everything was perfectly still. There was nothing in the afternoon but themselves.

When she arose, he, looking on the ground all the time, saw suddenly sprinkled on the black wet beach-room many scarlet carnation petals, like splashed drops of blood; and red, small splashes fell from her bosom, remaining down her dress to her feet.

"Your flowers are crushed," he said.

She looked at him heavily as she put back her hair. Suddenly he put his finger-tips on her cheek.

"Why don't look so heavy?" he approached her.

She smiled sadly, as if she felt alone in herself. He caressed her cheek with his fingers, and kissed her.

"Nay!" he said. "Never thus before!"

She gripped his fingers tight, and laughed shakily. Then she dropped her head. He put the hair back from her brows, stroking her temples, kissing them lightly.

"But the shoulders weevil!" he said sadly, pleading.

"No, I don't weevil!" she laughed modestly and resigned.

"Yes, the don't! Dances they weevil," he implored, darting.

"Nay!" she repeated him, kissing him.

They had a stiff climb to get to the top again. It took down a quarter of an hour. When he got on to the level grass, he threw off his cap, wiped the sweat from his forehead, and sighed.

"Now we're back at the ordinary level," he said.

She sat down, parring, on the tenderly grass. Her cheeks were flushed pink. He kissed her, and she gave way to joy.

"And now I'll dress thy boots and make thee fit for respectable folk," he said.

He knelt at her feet, worked away with a stick and tufts of grass. She put her fingers in his hair, drew his head to her, and kissed it.

"What am I supposed to be doing," he said, looking at her laughing; "clearing shoes or dithering with love? Answer me that!"

"Just whichever I please," she replied.

"I'm your beneficiary for the time being, and nothing else." But they remained looking into each other's eyes and laughing. Then they passed with little ribbing times.

"To-day!" he went with his tongue, like his mother. "I tell you, nothing gets done when there's a woman about."

And he returned to his boot-shining, singing softly. She caressed his thick hair, and he kissed her fingers. He watched away at her shoes. At last they were quite presentable.

"There you are, you see!" he said. "Aren't I a great hand at restoring you to respectability? Stand up! There, you look as irreproachable as Britannia herself!"

He cleaned his own boots a little, washed his hands in a puddle, and sang. They went on into Clifton village. He was mostly in love with her; every movement she made, every smile in her garments, sent a hot flush through him and seemed adorable.

The old lady at whose house they had tea was raised into gaiety by them.

"I could wish you'd had something of a better day," she said, hesitating sound.

"May!" he laughed. "We've been trying how nice it is."

The old lady looked at him curiously. There was a peculiar glow and charm about him. His eyes were dark and laughing. He rubbed his mustache with a glad movement.

"Have you been trying at?" she exclaimed, a light teasing in her old eyes.

"Truly!" he laughed.

"Then I'm sure the day's good enough," said the old lady.

She passed about, and did not want to leave them.

"I don't know whether you'd like some radishes as well," she said to Clara; "but I've got none in the garden—only a cucumber."

Clara flushed. She looked very handsome.

"I should like some radishes," she answered.

And the old lady passed off gladly.

"If she knew!" Clara said quietly to him.

"Well, she doesn't know; and it shows we're nice to ourselves, at any rate. You look quite enough to satisfy an archbishop, and I'm sure I feel handsome—so—if it makes you look nice, and makes folk happy when they have us, and makes us happy—why, we're not cheating them out of much!"

They went on with the meal. When they were going away, the old lady came slowly with three dry shillies in full blow, sent as before, and speckled scarlet and white. She stood before Clara, pleased with herself, saying:

"I don't know whether——" and holding the flowers forward to her old hand.

"Oh, how pretty!" cried Clara, accepting the flowers.

"Shall she have them all?" asked Paul reproachfully of the old woman.

"Yes, she shall have them all," she replied, beaming with joy.

"You have got enough for your share."

"Ah, but I shall ask her to give me one!" he teased.

"Then she does as she pleases," said the old lady, smiling. And she looked a little surer of delight.

Clara was rather quiet and uncomfortable. As they walked along, he said:

"You don't feel criminal, do you?"

She looked at him with startled grey eyes.

"Criminal!" she said. "No."

"But you seem to feel you have done a wrong?"

"No," she said. "I only think, 'If they knew!'"

"If they knew, they'd cease to understand. As it is, they do understand, and they like it. What do they matter? Here, with only the moon and me, you don't feel not the least bit wrong, do you?"

He took her by the arm, held her facing him, holding her eyes with his. Something trembled him.

"Not storm, are we?" he said, with an uneasy little frown.

"No," she replied.

He kissed her, laughing.

"You like your little bit of guiltiness, I believe," he said. "I believe Eve enjoyed it, when she went crawling out of Paradise."

But there was a certain glow and quietness about her that made him glad. When he was alone in the railway-carriage, he found himself tremendously happy; and the people exceedingly nice, and the night lovely, and everything good.

Miss Morel was sitting reading when he got home. Her health was not good now, and there had come that ivory pallor into her face which he never noticed, and which afterwards he never forgot. She did not mention her own ill-health to him. After all, she thought, it was not much.

"You are late!" she said, looking at him.

His eyes were shining; his face seemed to glow. He smiled at her.

"Yes, I've been down Clifton Grove with Clara."

His mother looked at him again.

"But wasn't people told?" she said.

"Why? They know she's a raffish girl, and so on. And what if they do talk!"

"Of course, there may be nothing wrong in it," said his mother. "But you know what folk are, and if once she gets talked about—"

"Well, I can't help it. Their jaw isn't so altogether important, after all."

"I think you ought to consider her."

"So I do! What can people say?—that we take a walk together. I believe you're jealous."

"You know I should be glad if she weren't a married woman."

"Well, my dear, she lives separate from her husband, and talks on platforms; so she's already singled out from the sheep, and, so far as I can see, hasn't much to lose. May her life's working to her, so what's the worth of nothing? She goes with me—it becomes something. Then she must pay—we both must pay! Folk are so frightened of paying; they'd rather starve and die."

"Very well, my son. We'll see how it will end."

"Very well, my mother. I'll abide by the end."

"We'll see!"

"And she's—she's awfully nice, mother; she is really! You don't know!"

"That's not the same as marrying her."

"It's perhaps better."

There was silence for a while. He wanted to ask his mother something, but was afraid.

"Should you like to know her?" He hesitated.

"Yes," said Mrs. Morel really. "I should like to know what she's like."

"But she's nice, mother, she is! And not a bit common!"

"I never suggested she was."

"But you seem to think she's—not so good as— She's better than ninety-nine folk out of a hundred, I tell you! She's better, she is! She's fair, she's honest, she's straight! There isn't anything underhand or superior about her. Don't be mean about her!"

Mrs. Morel flushed.

"I am sure I am not mean about her. She may be quite as you say, but—"

"You don't approve," he finished.

"And do you expect me to?" she answered coldly.

"Yes—yes!—if you'd anything about you, you'd be glad! Do you want to see her?"

"I said I did."

"Then I'll bring her—shall I bring her here?"

"You please yourself."

"Then I will bring her here—one Sunday—so on. If you think a harmful thing about her, I shall forgive you."

His mother laughed.

"As if it would make any difference!" she said. He knew he had won.

"Oh, but it feels so nice, mother, when she's there! She's such a queen in her way."

Occasionally he still walked a little way from chapel with Miriam and Edgar. He did not go up to the farm. She, however, was very much the same with him, and he did not feel embarrassed in her presence. One evening she was alone when he accompanied her. They began by talking books: it was their usual topic. Mrs. Moor had said that his and Miriam's affair was like a fire that on books—if there were no more volumes it would die out. Miriam, for her part, boasted that she could read him like a book, could place her finger any minute on the chapter and the line. He, easily taken in, believed that Miriam knew more about him than anyone else. So it pleased him to talk to her about himself, like the simplest of topics. Very soon the conversation drifted to his own things. It amused him immensely that he was of such superior interest.

"And what have you been doing lately?"

"E—oh, not much! I made a sketch of Eyrewood from the garden, that is nearly right as far. It's the handsomest try."

So they went on. Then she said:

"You've not been out, then, lately?"

"Yes; I went up Clifton Grove on Monday afternoon with Clem."

"It was not very nice weather," said Miriam, "was it?"

"But I wanted to go out, and it was all right. The Trees is full."

"And did you go to Barton?" she asked.

"No; we had tea in Clifton."

"Did you? That would be nice."

"It was! The jolliest old woman! She gave us several possum dahlias, so pretty as you like."

Miriam bowed her head and brooded. He was quite unconscious of concealing anything from her.

"What made her give them you?" she asked.

He laughed.

"Because she liked us—because we were jolly, I should think."

Miriam put her finger in her mouth.

"Were you late home?" she asked.

At last he answered her question.

"I caught the seven-thirty."

"Ha!"

They walked in silence, and he was angry.

"And how is Clara?" asked Miriam.

"Quite all right, I think."

"That's good!" she said, with a tinge of irony. "By the way, what of her husband? One never hears anything of him."

"He's got some other women, and it's also quite all right," he replied. "At least, so I think."

"I see—you don't know for certain. Don't you think a position like that is hard on a woman?"

"Recently hard!"

"It's no unfair!" said Miriam. "The man does as he likes!"

"Then let the women obey," he said.

"How can she? And if she does, look at her position!"

"What of it?"

"Why, it's impossible! You don't understand what a woman feels!"

"No, I don't. But if a woman's got nothing but her fair name to feed on, why, it's thin rock, and a donkey would die of it!"

So she understood his moral attitude, at least, and she knew he would act accordingly.

She never asked him anything direct, but she got to know enough.

Another day, when he saw Miriam, the conversation turned to marriage, then to Clara's marriage with Dawson.

"You see," he said, "she never knew the social importance of marriage. She thought it was all in the day's march—it would have to come—and Dawson—well, a good many women would have given their souls to get him; so why not him? Then she developed into the *finest* example, and treated him badly, I'll bet my boots."

"And she left him because he didn't understand her?"

"I suppose so. I suppose she had to. It isn't altogether a question of understanding; it's a question of *being*. With him, she was only half alive; the rest was dormant, shadowed. And the dormant woman was the *finest* example, and she had to be awakened."

"And what about him?"

"I don't know. I rather think he loves her as much as he can, but he's a fool."

"It was something like your mother and father," said Miriam.

"Yes; but my mother, I believe, got real joy and satisfaction out of my father at first. I believe she had a passion for him;

that's why she stayed with him. After all, they were bound to each other."

"Yes," said Miriam.

"That's what one must do, I think," he continued—"the real, real flame of feeling through another person—once, only once, if it only lasts three months. See, my mother looks as if she'd had everything that was necessary for her living and developing. There's not a tiny bit of a feeling of sterility about her."

"No," said Miriam.

"And with my father, at first, I'm sure she had the real thing. She knows; she has been there. You can feel it about her, and about him, and about hundreds of people you meet every day; and, once it has happened to you, you can go on with anything and ripen."

"What has happened, exactly?" asked Miriam.

"It's so hard to say, but the something big and intense that changes you when you really come together with somebody else. It almost seems to fertilize your soul and make it that you can go on and mature."

"And you think your mother had it with your father?"

"Yes; and at the bottom she feels grateful to him for giving it her, even now, though they are miles apart."

"And you think Clara never had it?"

"I'm sure."

Miriam pondered this. She saw what he was seeking—a sort of baptism of fire in passion, it seemed to her. She realized that he would never be satisfied till he had it. Perhaps it was essential to him, as to some men, to one wild man; and afterwards, when he was satisfied, he would not rapt with randomness any more, but could settle down and give her his life over her hands. Well, then, if he must go, let him go and have his fill—something big and intense, he called it. As any man, when he had got it, he would not want it—that he told himself; he would want the other thing that she could give him. He would want to be owned, so that he could trust. It seemed to her a bitter thing that he must go, but she could let him go into an inn for a glass of whisky, so she could let him go to Clara, so long as it was something that would satisfy a need in him, and leave him free for herself to possess.

"Have you told your mother about Clara?" she asked.

She knew this would be a test of the seriousness of his feeling for the other woman; the latter he was going to Clara for something vital, not as a man goes for pleasure to a prostitute, if he told his mother.

"Yes," he said, "and she is coming to me on Sunday."

"To your house?"

"Yes; I went rather to see her."

"Ah!"

There was a silence. Things had gone quicker than she thought. She felt a sudden bitterness that he could leave her so soon and so easily. And was Clara to be accepted by his people, who had been so hostile to herself?

"I may call in as I go to chapel," she said. "It is a long time since I saw Clara."

"Very well," he said, astonished, and unconsciously angry.

On the Sunday afternoon he went to Kewen to meet Clara at the station. As he stood on the platform he was trying to examine in himself if he had a premonition.

"Do I feel as if she'd come?" he said to himself, and he tried to feel sure. His heart felt queer and constrained. That seemed like foreboding. Then he *had* a foreboding she would not come! Then she would not come, and instead of taking her over the hills home, as he had imagined, he would have to go alone. The train was late; the afternoon would be wasted, and the evening. He hated her for not coming. Why had she promised, then, if she could not keep her promise? Perhaps she had misread her table—he himself was always misreading tables—but that was no reason why she should make this particular one. He was angry with her; he was furious.

Suddenly he saw the train crawling, snaking round the corner. Here, there, was the train, but of course she had not come. The green engines hissed along the platform, the new silveren coaches drew up, several doors opened. No; she had not come! No! Yes; ah, there she was! She had a big black hat on! He was at her side in a moment.

"I thought you weren't coming," he said.

She was laughing rather breathlessly as she put out her hand to him; their eyes met. He took her quickly along the platform, talking at a great rate to hide his feeling. She looked beautiful. In her hat were large stiff roses, coloured like tarnished gold. Her costume of dark cloth fitted so beautifully over her breast and shoulders. His pulse went up as he walked with her. He felt the station people, who knew him, eyed her with awe and admiration.

"I was sure you weren't coming," he laughed shakily.

She laughed in answer, almost with a little cry.

"And I wondered, when I was in the train, whether I should do if you weren't there!" she said.

He caught her hand impulsively, and they went along the

carriage twisted. They took the road into Nantall and over the Bucktoning House Farm. It was a blue, mild day. Everywhere the beech leaves lay scattered; many scarlet hips stood upon the hedges beside the road. He gathered a few for her to wear.

"Though, really," he said, as he fitted them into the bosom of her coat, "you ought to object to my getting them, because of the birds. But they don't care much for raspberries in this part, where they can get plenty of stuff. You often find the berries going rotten in the springtime."

So he chattered, scarcely aware of what he said, only knowing he was putting berries in the bosom of her coat, while she stood patiently for him. And she watched his quick hands, so full of life, and it seemed to her she had never seen anything before. Till now, everything had been indifferent.

They came near to the colliery. It stood quite still and black among the corn-fields, its immense heap of slag seen rising almost from the corn.

"What a pity there is a coal-pit here where it is so pretty!" said Clara.

"Do you think so?" he answered. "You see, I am so used to it I should miss it. No; and I like the pit here and there. I like the rows of trunks, and the headstocks, and the steam in the day-time, and the lights at night. When I was a boy, I always thought a pillar of cloud by day and a pillar of fire by night was a pit, with its steam, and its lights, and the hurrying tank,—and I thought the Lord was always at the pit-top."

As they drove near home she walked in silence, and seemed to hang back. He pressed her fingers in his own. She flushed, but gave no response.

"Don't you want to come home?" he asked.

"Yes, I want to come," she replied.

It did not occur to him that her position in his home would be rather a peculiar and difficult one. To him it seemed just as if one of his own friends were going to be introduced to his mother, only alone.

The Marsh lived in a house in an ugly street that ran down a steep hill. The street itself was hideous. The house was rather superior to most. It was old, grimy, with a big bay window, and it was semi-detached; but it looked gloomy. Then Paul opened the door to the garden, and all was different. The sunny afternoon was there, like another land. By the path grew many and little trees. In front of the window was a plot of sunny grass, with old flowers round it. And away went the garden, with heaps of dishevelled daisy-stems in the sunshine, down to the sycamore-

yes, and the field, and beyond one looked over a broad wooded country to the hills with all the glow of the autumn afternoon.

Mrs. Morel sat in her rocking-chair, wearing her black silk blouse. Her grey-brown hair was taken smooth back from her brow and her high temples; her face was rather pale. Clara, suffering, followed Paul into the kitchen. Mrs. Morel rose. Clara thought her a lady, even motherly. The young woman was very nervous. She had almost a wild look, almost crazed.

"Mother—Clara," said Paul.

Mrs. Morel held out her hand and smiled.

"He has told me a great deal about you," she said.

The blood flamed in Clara's cheeks.

"I hope you don't mind my coming," she faltered.

"I was pained when he said he would bring you," replied Mrs. Morel.

Paul, watching, felt his heart contract with pain. His mother looked so small, and sad, and down for beside the handsome Clara.

"It's such a pretty day, mother!" he said. "And warm a day."

His mother looked at him; he had turned so too. She thought what a man he seemed, in his dark, well-made clothes. He was pale and detached-looking; it would be hard for any woman to keep him. Her heart glowed; then she was sorry for Clara.

"Perhaps you'll leave your things in the parlor," said Mrs. Morel nicely to the young woman.

"Oh, thank you," she replied.

"Come on," said Paul, and he led the way into the little front-room, with its old piano, its mahogany furniture, its yellowing marble mantelpiece. A fire was burning; the piano was lined with books and drawing-boards. "I have my things lying about," he said. "It's so much easier."

She loved his artist's paraphernalia, and the books, and the photos of people. Even he was telling her: this was William, this was William's young lady in the evening dress, this was Annie and her husband, this was Arthur and his wife and the baby. She felt as if she were being taken into the family. He showed her photos, books, sketches, and they talked a little while. Then they returned to the kitchen. Mrs. Morel put aside her book. Clara wore a blouse of fine silk cloth, with narrow black-and-white stripes; her hair was done simply, coiled on top of her head. She looked rather anxiously and reserved.

"You have gone to live down Madison Boulevard?" said Mrs. Morel. "When I was a girl—girl, I say!—when I was a young woman we lived in *Maison Terraza*."

"Oh, did you?" said Clara. "I have a friend in Number 6."

And the conversation had started. They talked Nottingham and Nottingham people; it interested them both. Clara was still rather nervous; Mrs. Morel was still somewhat on her dignity. She clipped her language very clear and precise. But they were going to get on well together, Paul saw.

Mrs. Morel measured herself against the younger women, and found herself easily stronger. Clara was disconcerted. She knew Paul's surprising regard for his mother, and she had dreaded the evening, expecting someone rather hard and cold. She was surprised to find this little interested woman chatting with such readiness; and then she felt, as she felt with Paul, that she would have cause to stand in Mrs. Morel's way. There was something so hard and certain in his mother, as if she never had a rapturing in her life.

Presently Morel came down, ruffled and yawning, from his afternoon sleep. He scratched his grizzled head, he nodded in his stockinged feet, his waistcoat hanging open over his shirt. He seemed incongruous.

"This is Mrs. Davies, father," said Paul.

Then Morel pulled himself together. Clara saw Paul's manner of bowing and shaking hands.

"Oh, indeed!" exclaimed Morel. "I am very glad to see you—I am, I assure you. But don't disturb yourself. No, no; make yourself quite comfortable, and be very welcome."

Clara was astonished at this flood of hospitality from the old collier. He was so courteous, so gallant! She thought him most delightful.

"And may you have come that?" he asked.

"Only from Nottingham," she said.

"From Nottingham! Then you have had a beautiful day for your journey."

Then he stepped into the scullery to wash his hands and face, and from floor of brick came on to the hearth with the towel to dry himself.

As Mrs. Clara felt the refinement and many-fold of the household. Mrs. Morel was perfectly at her ease. The pouring out the tea and attending to the people went on unconsciously, without interrupting her in her talk. There was a fire of coals at the oval table; the dais of dark blue willow-pattern looked pretty on the glossy cloth. There was a little bowl of small, yellow chrysanthemums. Clara felt she completed the circle, and it was a pleasure to her. But she was rather afraid of the self-possession of the Morels, father and all. She took their tea; there was a feeling of balance. It was a cool, clear atmosphere, where everyone was

himself, and in harmony. Clara enjoyed it, but there was a fear deep at the bottom of her.

Paul cleared the table while his mother and Clara talked. Clara was conscious of his quick, vigorous body as it came and went, crossing blown quickly by a wind as its work. It was almost like the lighter and thicker of a leaf that comes unexpected. Most of herself went with him. By the way the leaves fanned, as if blowing, Mrs. Mirel could see she was possessed elsewhere as she talked, and again the elder woman was sorry for her.

Having finished, he strolled down the garden, leaving the two women to talk. It was a happy, sunny afternoon, mild and soft. Clara glanced through the window after him as he listened among the chrysanthemums. She felt as if something almost laughable happened her to him: yet he seemed so easy in his graceful, incident movement, so detached as he tied up the too-heavy flower-bunches to their stalks, that she wanted to shrink in her helplessness.

Mrs. Mirel rose.

"You will let me help you wash up," said Clara.

"Oh, there are so few, it will only take me a minute," said the other.

Clara, however, dried the tea-things, and was glad to be on such good terms with his mother; but it was necessary not to be able to follow him down the garden. At last she allowed herself to go; she felt as if a rope were taken off her neck.

The afternoon was golden over the hills of Derbyshire. Blasted acres in the other garden, beside a bank of pale Michaelmas daisies, watching the last bees crawl into the hive. Hearing her coming, he turned to her with an easy motion, saying:

"It's the end of the run with these things."

Clara stood near him. Over the low red wall in front was the country and the far-off hills, all golden then.

At that moment Adeline was entering through the garden-door. She saw Clara go up to him, saw him turn, and saw them come to her together. Something in their perfect inclusion together made her know that it was accomplished between them, that they were, at the put it, married. She walked very slowly down the stair-track of the long garden.

Clara had pulled a basket from a hollyhock spine, and was looking it to get the seeds. Above her lowered head the pink flowers stared, as if defending her. The last bees were falling down to the hive.

"Count your money," laughed Paul, as she looks the flat seeds one by one from the roll of silk. She looked at him.

"I'm well off," she said, smiling.

"How much? Pi!" He snapped his fingers. "Can I turn them into gold?"

"I'm afraid not," she laughed.

They looked into each other's eyes, laughing. At that moment they became aware of Miriam. There was a click, and everything had altered.

"Hello, Miriam!" he exclaimed. "You said you'd come!"

"Yes. Had you forgotten?"

She shook hands with Clara, saying:

"It seems strange to see you here!"

"Yes," replied the other; "it seems strange to be here."

There was a hesitation.

"It is pretty, isn't it?" said Miriam.

"I like it very much," replied Clara.

Then Miriam realised that Clara was accepted as she had never been.

"Have you come down alone?" asked Paul.

"Yes; I went to Agatha's to tea. We are going to chapel. I only called in for a moment to see Clara."

"You should have come in here to tea," he said.

Miriam laughed shortly, and Clara started impatiently aside.

"Do you like the chrysanthemums?" he asked.

"Yes: they are very fine," replied Miriam.

"Which sort do you like best?" he asked.

"I don't know. The beauty, I think."

"I don't think you've seen all the sorts. Come and look. Come and see which are your favourites, Clara."

He led the two women back to his own garden, where the rounded bushes of flowers of all colours stood suggestively along the path down to the field. The situation did not embarrass him, so his knowledge.

"Look, Miriam; these are the white ones that come from your garden. They aren't so fast here, are they?"

"No," said Miriam.

"But they're hardier. You're so sheltered; things grow big and tender, and then die. These little fellows are I like. Will you have some?"

While they were out there the bells began to ring in the church, sounding loud across the town and the field. Miriam looked at the tower, peered among the clattering roof, and remembered the situation he had brought her. It had been different then, but he had not left her even yet. She asked him for a book to read. He ran indoors.

"What! is that Miriam?" asked his mother coldly.

"Yes; she said she'd call and see Clara."

"You told her, then?" came the anxious answer.

"Yes; why shouldn't I?"

"There's certainly no reason why you shouldn't," said Mrs. Morel, and she returned to her book. He looked from his mother's face, frowning irritably, thinking: "Why can't I do as I like?"

"You've not seen Mrs. Morel before?" Miriam was saying to Clara.

"No; but she's at school."

"Yes," said Miriam, dropping her head; "in some ways she's very fine."

"I should think so."

"Has Paul told you much about her?"

"He had talked a good deal."

"He?"

There was silence until he returned with the book.

"When will you want it back?" Miriam asked.

"When you like," he answered.

Clara turned to go indoors, whilst he accompanied Miriam to the gate.

"When will you come up to Willey Farm?" she latter asked.

"I couldn't say," replied Clara.

"Mother asked me to say she'd be pleased to see you any time, if you cared to come."

"Thank you; I should like so, but I can't say when."

"Oh, very well!" exclaimed Miriam rather bitterly, turning away.

She went down the path with her mouth to the flowers he had given her.

"You're sure you won't come in?" he said.

"No, thank."

"We are going to chapel."

"Ha, I shall see you, then!" Miriam was very bitter.

"Yes."

They parted. He left guiltily towards her. She was bitter, and she scorned him. He still belonged to himself, she believed; yet he could have Clara, take her home, sit with her next his mother in chapel, give her the same hymn-book he had given heretofore. She heard him running quickly indoors.

But he did not go straight in. Halting on the plot of grass, he heard his mother's voice, then Clara's answer:

"What I hate is the bloodthirsty quality in Miriam."

"Yes," said his mother quickly, "yes; doesn't it make you hate her, now?"

His heart went hot, and he was angry with them for talking about the girl. What right had they to say that? Something in the speech itself struck him into a flame of hate against Miriam. Then his own heart rebelled furiously at Clara's taking the liberty of speaking so about Miriam. After all, she girl was the better woman of the two, he thought, if it came to goodness. He went on. His mother looked excited. She was beating with her hand rhythmically on the sofa-arm, as women do who are working out. He could never hear to see the movement. There was silence, then he began to talk.

In chapel Miriam saw him find the place in the hymn-book for Clara, in exactly the same way as he used for herself. And during the service he could see the girl across the chapel, her hat throwing a dark shadow over her face. What did she think, seeing Clara with him? He did not stop to consider. He felt himself urged towards Miriam.

After chapel he went over French with Clara. It was a dark autumn night. They had said good-bye to Miriam, and his heart had ached as he left the girl alone. "But it serves her right," he said inside himself, and it almost gave him pleasure to go off under her arm with this other handsome woman.

There was a sort of damp leave in the darkness. Clara's hand lay warm and firm in his own as they walked. He was full of resolve. The battle that raged inside him made him feel desperate.

Up French Hill Clara leaned against him as he went. He slid his arm round her waist. Feeling the strong motion of her body under his arm as she walked, the tightness in his chest because of Miriam relaxed, and the hot blood bathed him. He held her closer and closer.

Then: "You still keep on with Miriam," she said quietly.

"Only talk. There never was a great deal more than talk between us," he said lightly.

"Your mother doesn't care for her," said Clara.

"No, or I might have married her. But it's all up, really!"

Suddenly his voice went passionate with hate.

"If I was with her now, we should be jawing about the Christian Mystery, or some such tack. Thank God, I'm not!" They walked on in silence for some time.

"But you can't really give her up," said Clara.

"I don't give her up, because there's nothing to give," he said.

"There is for her."

"I don't know why she and I shouldn't be friends as long as we live," he said. "But it'll only be friends."

Clara drove away from him, leaving away from contact with him.

"What are you driving away for?" he asked.

She did not answer, but drove farther from him.

"Why do you want to walk alone?" he asked.

Still there was no answer. She walked resolutely, hanging her head.

"Because I said I would be friends with Miriam?" he exclaimed.

She would not answer him anything.

"I tell you it's only words that go between us," he persisted, trying to take her again.

She resisted. Suddenly he struck across in front of her, barring her way.

"Damn it!" he said. "What do you want now?"

"You'd better run after Miriam," sneered Clara.

The blood flamed up in him. He stood showing his teeth. She dropped quickly. The lane was dark, quite lonely. He suddenly caught her in his arms, stretched forward, and put his mouth on her face in a kiss of rage. She turned frantically to avoid him. He held her fast. Hard and relentless his speech came for her. Her breasts hurt against the wall of his chest. Helpless, she went down in his arms, and he kissed her, and kissed her.

He heard people coming down the hill.

"Stand up! stand up!" he said thickly, gripping her arm till it hurt. If he had let go, she would have sunk to the ground.

She lifted and walked slowly beside him. They went on in silence.

"We will go over the fields," he said; and then she woke up.

But she let herself be helped over the stile, and she walked in silence with him over the flat dark field. It was the way to Nottingham and to the station, she knew. He seemed to be looking about. They came out on a bare hilltop where stood the dark figure of the ruined windmill. There he halted. They stood together high up in the darkness, looking at the lights scattered on the night before them, hundreds of glimmering points, villages lying high and low on the dark, here and there.

"Like wending among the stars," he said, with a quaky laugh.

Then he took her in his arms, and held her fast. She moved wide her mouth to sob, dogged and low.

"What time is it?"

"It doesn't matter," he pleaded thickly.

"Yes it does—yes, I must go!"

"It's early yet," he said.

"What time is it?" she insisted.

All round lay the black night, speckled and spangled with lights.

"I don't know."

She put her hand on his chest, feeling for his watch. He felt the joints fuse into flesh. She groped in his waistcoat pocket, while he stood parting. In the darkness she could see the round, pale face of the watch, but not the figures. She stooped over it. He was peering till he could take her in his arms again.

"I can't see," she said.

"Then don't bother."

"Yes; I'm going!" she said, turning away.

"Wait! I'll look!" But he could not see. "I'll strike a match."

He secretly hoped it was too late to catch the train. She saw the glowing lantern of his hands as he cradled the light; then his face lit up, his eyes fixed on the watch. Instantly all was dark again. All was black before her eyes; only a glowing watch was red near her feet. Where was he?

"What is it?" she asked, afraid.

"You can't do it," his voice answered out of the darkness.

There was a pause. She felt in his power. She had heard the ring in his voice. It frightened her.

"What time is it?" she asked, quiet, definite, hopeless.

"Two minutes to nine," he replied, telling the truth with a struggle.

"And can I get from here to the station in fourteen minutes?"

"No. At any rate—"

She could distinguish his dark form again a yard or so away. She wanted to escape.

"But can't I do it?" she pleaded.

"If you hurry," he said brusquely. "But you could easily walk to, Clara; it's only seven miles to the train. I'll come with you."

"No; I want to catch the train."

"But why?"

"I do—I want to catch the train."

Suddenly his voice altered.

"Very well," he said, dry and hard. "Come along, then."

And he plunged ahead into the darkness. She ran after him, wanting to cry. Now he was hard and cruel to her. She ran over the rough, dark fields behind him, out of breath, ready to drop. But the double row of lights at the station drew nearer. Suddenly:

"There she is!" he cried, breaking into a run.

There was a faint rattling noise. Away to the right the train, like a luminous caterpillar, was shivering across the night. The rattling ceased.

"She's over the viaduct. You'll just do it."

Clara, ran quite out of breath, and fell at last into the train.

The whistle blew. He was gone. Gone!—and she was in a carriage full of people. She felt the cruelty of it.

He turned round and phoned home. Before he knew where he was he was in the kitchen at home. He was very pale. His eyes were dark and dangerous-looking, as if he were drunk. His mother looked at him.

"Well, I must say your home are in a nice state!" she said.

He looked at his feet. Then he took off his overcoat. His mother wondered if he were drunk.

"She caught the train, then?" she said.

"Yes."

"I hope her feet weren't so filthy. Where on earth you dragged her I don't know!"

He was silent and morbid for some time.

"Did you like her?" he asked gradually at last.

"Yes, I liked her. But you'll tire of her, my son; you know you will."

He did not answer. She noticed how he laboured in his breathing.

"Have you been nursing?" she asked.

"We had to run for the train."

"You'll go and knock yourself up. You'd better drink hot milk."

It was as good a moment as he could have, but he refused and went to bed. There he lay face down on the counterpane, and shed tears of rage and pain. There was a physical pain that made him bite his lips till they bled, and the chaos inside him left him unable to think, almost to feel.

"This is how she's been me, is it?" he said in his heart, over and over, pressing his face in the quilt. And he hated her. Again he went over the scene, and again he hated her.

The next day there was a new alcoholism about him. Clara was very gentle, almost loving. But he treated her disdainfully, with a touch of contempt. She sighed, continuing to be gentle. He came round.

One evening of that week Sarah Bernhardt was at the Theatre Royal in Nottingham, giving "*La Dame aux Camélias*." Fred wanted to see this old and famous actress, and he asked Clara to accompany him. He told his mother to leave the key in the window for him.

"Shall I look with?" he asked of Clara.

"Yes. And put on an evening suit, will you? I've never seen you in it."

"But, good Lord, Clara! Think of me in evening suit at the theatre!" he remonstrated.

"Would you rather not?" she asked.

"I will if you want me too, but I'll feel a fool."

She laughed at him.

"Then feel a fool for my sake, now, won't you?"

The request made his blood flush up.

"I suppose I'll have to."

"What are you taking a suit-case for?" his mother asked.

He blushed furiously.

"Clara asked me," he said.

"And what suits are you going in?"

"Circles—three—around me each!"

"Well, I'm sure!" exclaimed his mother sarcastically.

"It's only once in the bluest of blue moons," he said.

He dressed as Jackson's, put on an overcoat and a cap, and met Clara in a café. She was with one of her suffragette friends. She wore an old long coat, which did not suit her, and had a little wrap over her head, which he hated. The three went to the theatre together.

Clara took off her coat as the strains, and he discovered she was in a sort of semi-erasing dress, that left her arms and neck, and part of her breast bare. Her hair was done fashionably. The dress, a simple ring of green crepe, suited her. She looked quite grand, he thought. He could see her figure inside the frock, as if that were wrapped closely round her. The firmness and the softness of her upright body could almost be felt as he looked at her. He clenched his fists.

And he was to sit all the evening beside her beautiful naked arm, watching the strong throat rise from the strong chest, watching the breasts under the green stuff, the curve of her limbs in the tight dress. Something in him hated her again for submitting him to this torture of nervousness. And he loved her as she balanced her head and stared straight in front of her, poising, virginal, immobile, as if she yielded herself to her fate because it was too strong for her. She could not help herself; she was in the grip of something bigger than herself. A kind of eternal look about her, as if she were a virginal sphinx, made it necessary for him to kiss her. He dropped his programme, and crawled down on the floor to get it, so that he could kiss her hand and wrist. Her beauty was a torture to him. She sat immobile. Only, when the lights went down, she sank a little against him, and he caressed her hand and arm with his fingers. He could smell her faint perfume. All the time his blood kept sweeping up in great white-hot waves that killed his consciousness momentarily.

The drama continued. He saw it all in the distance, going on yet.

unrealities; he did not know where, but it seemed far away inside him. He was Clara's white heavy arms, her throat, her curving bosom. That seemed to be himself. Then away somewhere the play went on, and he was identified with that also. There was no himself. The grey and black eyes of Clara, her bosom coming down on him, his arms that he held gripped between his hands, were all that counted. Then he felt himself small and helpless, her towering in her dress above him.

Only the intervals, when the lights came up, hurt him awfully. He wanted to run anywhere, so long as it would be dark again. In a pause, he wandered out for a drink. Then the lights were out, and the strange, intense reality of Clara and the drama took hold of him again.

The play went on. But he was obsessed by the desire to kiss the tiny blue vein that ended in the bend of her arm. He could feel it. His whole life seemed suspended till he had put his lips there. It must be done. And the other people? At last he bent quickly forward and touched it with his lips. His mouthache brushed the smallest flesh. Clara shivered, drew away her arm.

When all was over, the lights up, the people clapping, he came to himself and looked at his watch. His train was gone.

"I still have to walk home!" he said.

Clara looked at him.

"Is it too late?" she asked.

He nodded. Then he helped her on with her coat.

"I love you! You look beautiful in that dress," he murmured over her shoulder, among the throng of hurrying people.

She remained quiet. Together they were out of the theatre. He saw the cabs waiting, the people passing. It seemed he met a pair of brown eyes which looked him. But he did not know. He and Clara turned away, mechanically taking the direction to the station.

The train had gone. He would have to walk the six miles home.

"It doesn't matter," he said. "I shall enjoy it."

"Won't you," she said, laughing, "come home for the night? I can sleep with mother."

He looked at her. Their eyes met.

"What will your mother say?" he asked.

"She won't mind."

"You're sure?"

"Quite!"

"Shall I come?"

"If you will."

"Very well."

And they turned away. At the first stopping-place they took the car. The wind blew fresh in their faces. The town was dark; the train tipped in its haste. He sat with her hand fast in his.

"Will your mother be gone to bed?" he asked.

"She may be. I hope not."

They hurried along the silent, dark little street, the only people out of doors. Clara quickly entered the house. He hesitated.

"Come in," she said.

He leaped up the step and was in the room. Her mother appeared in the front doorway, large and hostile.

"Who have you got there?" she asked.

"It's Mr. Morely; he has missed his train. I thought we might put him up for the night, and save him a ten-mile walk."

"How!" exclaimed Mrs. Radford. "That's your brother! If you've invited him, he's very welcome as far as I'm concerned. You keep the house!"

"If you don't like me, I'll go away again," he said.

"Oh, my, you needn't! Come along in! I do what you'll think of the supper I'd get her."

It was a little dish of chip potatoes and a piece of bacon. The table was roughly laid for one.

"You can have some more bacon," continued Mrs. Radford. "Miss Chips you can't have."

"It's a shame to bother you," he said.

"Oh, don't you be apologetic! It doesn't do us' mat! You treated her in the theatre, didn't you?" There was a scream in the last question.

"What?" laughed Paul unconcernedly.

"Well, and what's an inch of bacon! Take your coat off!"

The big, straight-standing woman was trying to estimate the situation. She moved about the cupboard. Clara took his coat. The room was very warm and cosy in the lamplight.

"My dear!" exclaimed Mrs. Radford; "has you two's a pair of bright beauties, I must say! What's all that gossip for?"

"I believe we don't know," he said, feeling a victim.

"There isn't room in this house for two such babbly-sisters, if you fly your lips that high!" she rallied them. It was a nasty threat.

He in his dinner jacket, and Clara in her green dress and bare arms, were confused. They felt they must shelter each other in that little kitchen.

"And look at our blossom!" continued Mrs. Radford, pointing to Clara. "What does she reckon she did it for?"

Paul looked at Clara. She was rosy; her neck was warm with blushes. There was a moment of silence.

"You like to see it, don't you?" he asked.

The mother had them in her power. All the time his heart was beating hard, and he was rigid with anxiety. But he would fight her.

"He likes to see it!" exclaimed the old woman. "What should I like to see her make a fool of herself by?"

"I've seen people look bigger fools," he said. Clara was under his protection now.

"Oh, yes! and when was that?" came the sarcastic rejoinder.

"When they made flights of themselves," he answered.

Mrs. Radford, large and flourishing, stood suspended on the hearthrug, holding her fork.

"They're fools either way," she answered at length, turning to the Dutch oven.

"No," he said, fighting manfully. "Fools ought to look as well as they can."

"And do you call that looking nice?" cried the mother, pointing a scornful fork at Clara. "That—that looks as if it wasn't properly dressed!"

"I believe you're jealous that you can't speak as well," he said laughing.

"Me! I could have worn mourning down with anybody, if I'd wanted to!" came the scornful answer.

"And why didn't you want to?" he asked pertinently. "Or did you wear it?"

There was a long pause. Mrs. Radford scrutinized the bacon in the Dutch oven. His heart beat fast, for fear he had offended her.

"Me!" she exclaimed at last. "No, I didn't! And when I was in service, I knew as soon as one of the maids went out in bare shoulders what sort she was, going to her slipper-heap!"

"Were you too good to go to a slipper-heap?" he said.

Clara sat with bowed head. His eyes were dark and glittering. Mrs. Radford took the Dutch oven from the fire, and stood near him, putting him off bacon on his plate.

"There's a nice armful hit!" she said.

"Don't give me the bait," he said.

"She's got what she wants," was the answer.

There was a sort of scornful forbearance in the woman's tone that made Paul know she was justified.

"But do have some!" he said to Clara.

She looked up at him with her grey eyes, humiliated and lonely.

"No thanks!" she said.

"Why not?" he asked nervously.

The blood was beating up like fire in his veins. Mrs. Radford sat down again, large and impressive and aloof. He left Clara altogether to attend to the mother.

"They say Sarah Reinhardt's silly," he said.

"Ffy! She's turned silly!" came the scornful answer.

"Well," he said, "you'd never think it! She made me want to beat men now."

"I should like to see myself howling at that bad old baggage!" said Mrs. Radford. "It's time she began to think herself a grandmother, not a shivering catamantan——"

He laughed.

"A catamantan is a bear the Malays use," he said.

"And it's a word as I use," she retorted.

"My mother does sometimes, and it's no good my telling her," he said.

"I'd think she knows your own," said Mrs. Radford, good-humouredly.

"She'd like to, and she says she will, so I give her a little steel to steady on."

"That's the worst of my mother," said Clara. "She never wants a steel for anything."

"But she often can't reach that lady with a long prep," retorted Mrs. Radford to Paul.

"I'd think she doesn't want reaching with a prep," he laughed. "I shouldn't."

"It might do the pair of you good to give you a smack on the head with one," said the mother, laughing suddenly.

"Why are you so vindictive towards me?" he said. "I've not stolen anything from you."

"No; I'd swear that," laughed the older woman.

Soon the supper was finished. Mrs. Radford sat guard in her chair. Paul lit a cigarette. Clara went upstairs, returning with a sleeping-suit, which she spread on the bed to air.

"Why, I'd forget all about that!" said Mrs. Radford. "Where have they sprung from?"

"Out of my drawer."

"Hfy! You bought 'em like States, as 'he wouldn't wear 'em, would he?"—laughing. "Said he wanted to do without trousers I had." She turned confidentially to Paul, saying: "He wouldn't buy 'em, them pyjama things."

The young man sat making rings of smoke.

"Well, it's everyone to his taste," he laughed.

Then followed a little discussion of the merits of pajamas.

"My mother loans me in them," he said. "She says I'm a piece."

"I can imagine they'd suit you," said Mrs. Radford.

After a while he glanced at the little clock that was ticking on the mantelpiece. It was halfpast twelve.

"It is funny," he said, "but it takes hours to settle down to sleep after the theatre."

"It's about time you did," said Mrs. Radford, clearing the table.

"Are you tired?" he asked of Clara.

"Not the least bit," she answered, avoiding his eyes.

"Shall we have a game at cribbage?" he said.

"I've forgotten it."

"Well, I'll teach you again. May we play crib, Mrs. Radford?" he asked.

"You'll please yourself," she said; "but it's pretty late."

"A game or so will make us sleepy," he answered.

Clara brought the cards, and sat spinning her wedding-ring while he shuffled them. Mrs. Radford was washing up in the scullery. As it grew later Paul felt the situation getting more and more tense.

"Fifteen two, fifteen four, fifteen six, and two's eight——!"

The clock struck one. Still the game continued. Mrs. Radford had done all the little jobs preparatory to going to bed, had locked the door and filled the kettle. Still Paul went on dealing and counting. He was aroused by Clara's arms and throat. He believed he could see where the division was just beginning for her breakers. He could not leave her. She watched his hands, and felt her joints melt as they moved quickly. She was so near, it was almost as if he touched her, and yet not quite. His marble was round. He hated Mrs. Radford. She sat on, nearly dropping asleep, but determined and obstinate in her chair. Paul glanced at her, then at Clara. She met his eyes, that were angry, rawling, and hard as steel. Her own answered him in silence. He knew she, in any case, was of his mind. He played on.

At last Mrs. Radford roused herself wildly, and said:

"Isn't it high on time you two was thinking o' bed?"

Paul played on without answering. He hated her sufficiently to murder her.

"Half a minute," he said.

The elder woman rose and called authoritatively into the scullery, returning with his candle, which she put on the mantelpiece. Then she sat down again. The hatred of her went so hot down his veins, he dropped his cards.

"We'll stop, then," he said, but his voice was still a challenge.

Clara saw his mouth shut hard. Again he glanced at her. It seemed like an agreement. She bent over the cradle, coughing, to clear her throat.

"Well, I'm glad you've finished," said Mrs. Radford. "Here take your things"—she thrust the warm suit in his hand—"and this is your needle. Your moon's over this; there's only two, so you can't go far wrong. Well, good-night. I hope you'll rest well."

"I'm sure I shall; I always do," he said.

"Yes; and so you ought at your age," she replied.

He bade good-night to Clara, and went. The creaking stairs of white, scratched wood creaked and clanged at every step. He went doggedly. The two doors faced each other. He went to his room, pushed the door to, without fastening the latch.

It was a small room with a large bed. Some of Clara's hairpins were on the dressing-table—her hair-brush. Her clothes and some skirts hung under a cloth in a corner. There was actually a pair of stockings over a chair. He explored the room. Two books of his own were there on the shelf. He undressed, folded his suit, and sat on the bed, listening. Then he blew out the candle, lay down, and in two minutes was almost asleep. Then didn't—he was wide awake and writhing in torment. It was as if, when he had nearly got to sleep, something had bitten him suddenly and sent him mad. He sat up and looked at the room in the darkness, his feet doubled under him, perfectly motionless, listening. He heard a rat somewhere away outside; then the heavy, poised tread of the mother; then Clara's distant voice:

"Will you undress my dress?"

There was silence for some time. At last the mother said:

"Now then! aren't you coming up?"

"No, not yet," replied the daughter calmly.

"Oh, very well then! If it's not late enough, stay a bit longer. Only you needn't come waking me up when I've got to sleep."

"I shan't be long," said Clara.

Immediately afterwards Paul heard the mother slowly mounting the stairs. The candle-light flashed through the cracks in his door. Her dress brushed the door, and his heart jumped. Then it was dark, and he heard the creak of her latch. She was very leisurely indeed in her preparations for sleep. After a long time it was quite still. He sat wrung up on the bed, shivering slightly. His door was as latch open. As Clara came upstairs, he would intercept her. He waited. All was dead silence. The clock struck

ten. Then he heard a slight scrape of the slider downstairs. Now he could not help himself. His shivering was uncontrollable. He felt he must go or die.

He stepped off the bed, and stood a moment, shuddering. Then he went straight to the door. He tried to creep lightly. The first stair cracked like a shot. He halted. The old woman stirred in her bed. The staircase was dark. There was a slit of light under the side-door door, which opened into the kitchen. He stood a moment. Then he went on, mechanically. Every step cracked, and his back was creeping, but the old woman's door should open behind him up above. He fumbled with the door at the bottom. The latch opened with a loud click. He went through into the kitchen, and shut the door softly behind him. The old woman didn't come now.

Then he stood, arrested. Clara was kneeling on a pile of white underclothing on the hearthrug, her back towards him, warming herself. She did not look round, but sat crouching on her heels, and her rounded beautiful back was towards him, and her face was hidden. She was warming her body at the fire for consolation. The glow was warm on one side, the shadow was dark and warm on the other. Her arms hung slack.

He shuddered violently, clenching his teeth and fists hard to keep control. Then he went forward to her. He put one hand on her shoulder, the fingers of the other hand under her chin to raise her face. A convulsive shiver ran through her, warm, warm, at his touch. She kept her head bent.

"Sorry!" he murmured, realising that his hands were very cold.

Then she looked up at him, frightened, like a thing that is afraid of death.

"My hands are so cold," he murmured.

"I like it," she whispered, closing her eyes.

The touch of her words was on his mouth. Her arms clasped his knees. The cord of his sleeping-suit dangled against her and made her shiver. As the warmth went into him, his shuddering became less.

At length, unable to stand so any more, he raised her, and she buried her head on his shoulder. His hands went over her slowly with an infinite tenderness of nerve. She clung close to him, trying to hide herself against him. He clasped her very fast. Then at last she looked at him, warm, imploring, looking to see if she went he asked.

His eyes were dark, very deep, and very quiet. It was as if her beauty and his taking it hurt him, made him sorrowful. He looked

at her with a little pain, and was afraid. He was so humble before her. She kissed him fervently on the eyes, first one, then the other, and she tilted herself to him. She gave herself. He held her fast. It was a moment intense almost to agony.

She stood leaving him, adoring her and tremble with joy of her. It healed her hurt pride. It healed her; it made her glad. It made her feel even and proud again. Her pride had been wounded inside her. She had been cheapened. Now she radiated with joy and pride again. It was her consolation and her recognition.

Thus he looked at her, his face radiant. They laughed to each other, and he raised her to his chest. The seconds ticked off, the minutes passed, and still the two stood clasped right together, mouth to mouth, like a statue in one block.

But again his fingers were resting over her, restless, wandering, disturbed. The hot blood came up wave upon wave. She laid her head on his shoulder.

"Come you to my room," he murmured.

She looked at him and shook her head, her mouth pointing disconsolately, her eyes heavy with passion. He watched her fondly.

"Yes," he said.

Again she shook her head.

"Why not?" he asked.

She looked at him still heavily, sorrowfully, and again she shook her head. His eyes hardened, and he gave way.

When, later on, he was back in bed, he wondered why she had refused to come to him openly, so that her mother would know. At any rate, then things would have been definite. And she could have stayed with him the night, without having to go, as she was, to her mother's bed. It was strange, and he could not understand it. And then almost immediately he fell asleep.

His wake in the morning with someone speaking to him. Opening his eyes, he saw Mrs. Skulford, big and starchy, looking down on him. She held a cup of tea in her hand.

"Do you think you're going to sleep till December?" she said.

He laughed at once.

"It might only be about five o'clock," he said.

"Well," she answered, "it's half-past seven, whether or not. Here, I've brought you a cup of tea."

He nibbled his face, pushed the rumpled hair off his forehead, and roused himself.

"What's it so late for?" he growled.

He remembered being welcomed. It annoyed her. She saw his neck

in the flannel sleeping-jacket, as white and round as a girl's. He rubbed his hair wearily.

"It's no good your scratching your head," she said. "It won't make it no sarkier. Here, an' how long o' you think I'm going to stand waiting wif this here cap?"

"Oh, dash the cap!" he said.

"You should go to bed earlier," said the woman.

He looked up at her, laughing with impudence.

"I went to bed before you did," he said.

"Yeh, my Gumption, you did!" she exclaimed.

"Fanny," he said, stirring his tea, "having tea brought to bed to me! My mother'll think I'm raised for life."

"Don't she never do it?" asked Mrs. Radford.

"Should as have think of trying."

"Ah, I always spoilt my bed! That's why they've turned out such bad men," said the elderly woman.

"You'd only Clara," he said. "And Mr. Radford's in heaven. So I suppose there's only you left to be the bad man."

"I'm not bad; I'm only soft," she said, as she went out of the bedroom. "I'm only a fool, I am!"

Clara was very quiet at breakfast, but she had a sort of air of proprietorship over him that pleased him infinitely. Mrs. Radford was suddenly fond of him. He began to talk of his painting.

"What's the good?" exclaimed the mother, "of your whistling and snarling and retchins' and so-on at that painting of yours? What good does it do you, I should like to know? You'd better be upstair's room!"

"Oh, but," exclaimed Fred, "I made over thirty guineas last year."

"Did you? Well, that's a considerable, but it's nothing to the time you put in."

"And I've got five pounds to-day. A man said he'd give me five pounds if I'd paint him and his wife and the dog and the cottage. And I went and put the foot in instead of the dog, and he was waxy, so I had to knock a quid off. I was sick of it, and I didn't like the dog. I made a picture of it. What shall I do when he pays me the four pounds?"

"Nay! you know your own use for your money," said Mrs. Radford.

"But I'm going to bust this four pounds. Should we go to the market for a day or two?"

"What?"

"You and Clara and me."

"What, on your money?" she exclaimed, half-angry.

"Why not?"

"You wouldn't be long in breaking your neck at a hurdle race!" she said.

"So long as I get a good run for my money! Will you?"

"Nay; you may settle that between you."

"And you're willing?" he asked, amused and rejoicing.

"You'll do as you like," said Mrs. Radford, "whether I'm willing or not."

Buster Dawes

Soon after Paul had been to the theatre with Clara, he was strolling in the Fourth Road with some friends of his when Dawes came in. Clara's husband was growing stout; his eyelids were getting dark over his brown eyes; he was losing his healthy firmness of look. He was very evidently on the downward track. Having quarrelled with his sister, he had gone into cheap lodgings. His sisters had left him for a man who would marry her. He had been in prison one night for fighting when he was drunk, and there was a shady betting episode in which he was concerned.

Paul and he were confirmed enemies, and yet there was between them that peculiar feeling of intimacy, as if they were secretly near to each other, which sometimes exists between two people, although they never speak to one another. Paul often thought of Buster Dawes, often wanted to get at him and be friends with him. He knew that Dawes often thought about him, and that the man was drawn to him by some bond or other. And yet the two never looked at each other save in hostility.

Since he was a superior employee at Jackson's, it was the thing for Paul to offer Dawes a drink.

"What'd you have?" he asked of him.

"Nawt wif a blinder like you!" replied the man.

Paul turned away with a slight disdainful movement of the shoulders, very irritating.

"The whisky-cure," he continued, "is really a military institution. Take Germany, now. She's got thousands of soldiers whose only reason of existence is the army. They're deadly poor, and life's dreadfully slow. So they hope for a war. They look for war as a chance of getting on. Till there's a war they are idle good-for-nothings. When there's a war, they are leaders and commanders. There you see, then—they must war!"

He was not a favourite debater in the public-house, being too quick and overhearing. He irritated the older men by his assertions, manner, and his cockiness. They listened in silence, and were not sorry when he finished.

Dawes interrupted the young man's flow of eloquence by asking, in a loud tone:

"Did you know all that at th' chere sh' othe night?"

Paul looked at him; their eyes met. Then he knew Dawson had seen him coming out of the tent with Clara.

"Whey, what about th' disease?" asked one of Paul's associates, glad to get a dig at the young fellow, and saying something funny.

"Oh, him in a hot-headed evening suit, on the lady-side!" sneered Dawson, jerking his head contemptuously at Paul.

"That's coming' in strong," said the mutual friend. "That 'an' all?"

"That, begod!" said Dawson.

"Go on; let's have it!" cried the mutual friend.

"You've got it," said Dawson, "an' I reckon Morrell had it an' all."

"Well, I'll be jiggered!" said the mutual friend. "An' was it a proper tale?"

"That, God bless—yes!"

"How do you know?"

"Oh," said Dawson, "I reckon he spent sh' night——"

There was a good deal of laughter at Paul's expense.

"But who was she? If you know her?" asked the mutual friend.

"I should say she," said Dawson.

This brought another burst of laughter.

"Then apt is not," said the mutual friend.

Dawson shook his head, and took a gulp of beer.

"It's a wonder he hasn't let us passel," he said. "He'll be brought' of it in a bit."

"Come on, Paul," said the friend; "it's no good. You might just as well run up."

"Over up what? That I happened to take a friend to the chere?"

"Oh, well, if it was all right, tell us who she was, lad," said the friend.

"She was all right," said Dawson.

Paul was furious. Dawson wiped his golden mustache with his fingers, smothering.

"Sister an'—! One o' that sort?" said the mutual friend.

"Paul, boy, I'm surprised at you. And do you know her, Dawson?"

"Just a bit, like!"

He winked at the other man.

"Oh, well," said Paul, "I'll be going!"

The mutual friend laid a drinking hand on his shoulder.

"Nay," he said, "you don't get off as easy as that, my lad. We've got to have a full account of this business."

"Then get it from Dawes!" he said.

"You shouldn't bark your own dogs, man," remonstrated the friend.

Then Dawes made a remark which caused Paul to throw half a glass of beer in his face.

"Oh, Mr. Mord!" cried the barmaid, and she rang the bell for the "chucker-out."

Dawes spat and cursed for the young man. At that minute a brawny fellow with his shirt-sleeves rolled up and his eyebrows right over his hairbrush intervened.

"Now, then!" he said, pushing his chest in front of Dawes.

"Come out!" cried Dawes.

Paul was leaning, white, and quivering, against the brass rail of the bar. He heard Dawes, whose something could not intimidate him at that moment; and at the same time, seeing the wet hair on the man's forehead, he thought he looked pathetic. He did not move.

"Come out, you——," said Dawes.

"That's enough, Dawes," cried the barmaid.

"Come on," said the "chucker-out," with kindly insistence, "you'd better be getting on."

And, by pushing Dawes edge away from his own close proximity, he worked him to the door.

"That's the little son as started it!" cried Dawes, half-cowed, pointing to Paul Mord.

"Why, what a story, Mr. Dawes!" said the barmaid. "You know it was you all the time."

Still the "chucker-out" kept shoving his chest forward at him, still he kept edging back, until he was in the doorway and on the steps outside; then he turned round.

"All right," he said, nodding straight at his chest.

Paul had a curious sensation of pity, almost of affection, mingled with violent hate, for the man. The coloured door swung up; there was silence in the bar.

"Serves him jolly well right!" said the barmaid.

"But it's a nasty thing to get a glass of beer in your eyes," said the mutual friend.

"I tell you I was glad he did," said the barmaid. "Will you have another, Mr. Mord?"

She held up Paul's glass questioningly. He nodded.

"He's a man as doesn't care for anything, is Buster Dawes," said she.

"Pooh! is he?" said the barmaid. "He's a head-mashed one, he is, and they're never much good. Give me a pleasure-spoken chap, if you want a devil!"

"Well, Paul, my lad," said the friend, "you'll have to take care of yourself now for a while."

"You won't have to give him a chance over you, that's all," said the barmaid.

"Can you box?" asked a friend.

"Not a bit," he answered, still very white.

"I might give you a turn or two," said the friend.

"Thanks, I haven't time."

And presently he took his departure.

"Go along with him, Mr. Jenkins," whispered the barmaid, dipping his. Jenkins was the drink.

The man nodded, took his hat, said "Good-night all" very heartily, and followed Paul, calling:

"Half a minute, old man. You an' me's going the same road, I believe."

"Mr. Morel doesn't like it," said the barmaid. "You'd see, we shan't have him in much more. I'm sorry; he's good company. And Baxter Brown wants looking up, that's what he wants."

Paul would have died rather than his mother should get to know of this affair. He suffered tortures of humiliation and self-consciousness. There was now a good deal of his life of which necessarily he could not speak to his mother. He had a life apart from her—his sexual life. The one she still kept. But he felt he had to conceal something from her, and it irked him. There was a certain silence between them, and he felt he had, in that silence, re-defined himself against her; he felt condemned by her. Then sometimes he hated her, and pulled at her bondage. His life wanted to free itself of her. It was like a circle whose life turned back on itself, and got no further. She tore him, loved him, kept him, and his love turned back into her, so that he could not be free to go forward with his own life, really love another woman. At this period, unknowingly, he retained his mother's influence. He did not tell her things; there was a distance between them.

Clara was happy, almost sure of him. She felt she had at last got him for herself; and then again came the uncertainty. He told her jokingly of the affair with her husband. Her colour came up, her grey eyes flashed.

"That's him to a 'T'," she cried—"like a navy! He's not fit for mixing with decent folk."

"Yet you married him," he said.

It made her furious that he concluded her.

"I don't!" she cried. "But how was I to know?"

"I think he might have been rather nice," he said.

"You think I made him what he is!" she exclaimed.

"Oh no! he made himself. But there's something about him——"

Clara looked at her lover closely. There was something in him she hated, a sort of detached criticism of herself, a coldness which made her woman's soul burn against him.

"And what are you going to do?" she asked.

"Hush!"

"About Foster?"

"There's nothing to do, is there?" he replied.

"You can fight him if you have to, I suppose!" she said.

"No; I haven't the least sense of the 'fit.' It's funny. With most men there's the instinct to crush the fit and bit. It's not so with me. I should want a knife or a pistol or something to fight with."

"Then you'd better carry something," she said.

"Say," he laughed: "I'm not dangerous."

"But he'll do something to you. You don't know him."

"All right," he said, "we'll see."

"And you'll let him?"

"Perhaps, if I can't help it."

"And if he kills you?" she said.

"I should be sorry, for his sake and mine."

Clara was silent for a moment.

"You do make me angry!" she exclaimed.

"That's nothing afraid," he laughed.

"But why are you so silly? You don't know him."

"And don't worry."

"Yes, but you're not going to let a man do as he likes with you?"

"What man I do?" he replied, laughing.

"I should carry a revolver," she said. "I'm sure he's dangerous."

"I might blow my fingers off," he said.

"No; but won't you?" she pleaded.

"No."

"Not anything?"

"No."

"And you'll leave him to——?"

"Yes."

"You are a fool!"

"Fool!"

She set her teeth with anger.

"I could state you!" she cried, trembling with passion.

"Why?"

"Let a man like him do as he likes with you."

"You can go back to him if he triumphs," he said.

"Do you want me to hate you?" she asked.

"Well, I only tell you," he said.

"And you say you love me!" she exclaimed, low and indignant.

"Ought I to stay him to please you?" he said. "But if I did, see what a hold he'd have over me."

"Do you think I'm a fool?" she exclaimed.

"Not at all. But you don't understand me, my dear."

There was a pause between them.

"But you ought not to expose yourself," she pleaded.

He shrugged his shoulders.

"The man is righteousness arrayed,
The pure and blameless lives,
Needs not the beta Toledo blade,
Nor venom-brightened quiver!"

he quoted.

She looked at him searchingly.

"I wish I could understand you," she said.

"There's simply nothing to understand," he laughed.

She bowed her head, brooding.

He did not see Dawn for several days; then one morning as he ran upstairs from the spiral room he almost collided with the barely mortal woman.

"What do——!" cried the youth.

"Sorry!" said Paul, and passed on.

"Dey!" accused Dawn.

Paul whistled lightly, "Put Me among the Girls."

"I'll stop your whistle, my jockey!" he said.

The other took no notice.

"You're going to answer for that job of the other night."

Paul went to his desk in his corner, and turned over the leaves of the ledger.

"Go and tell Fanny I want order egg, quick!" he said to his boy.

Dawn stood in the doorway, tall and threatening, looking at the top of the young man's head.

"Six and five's eleven and seven's one-and-six," Paul added aloud.

"Ain't you hear, do you?" said Dawn.

"*Flow and stopflow!*" He waved a figure. "What's that?" he said.

"I'm going to show you what it is," said the maid.

The other went on adding the figures aloud.

"You travel! little——, you doesn't like me proper!"

Paul quickly snatched the heavy rule. Dawes started. The young man ruled some lines in his ledger. The other man was infuriated.

"But wait till I light on you, no matter where it is, I'll waste your hands for a bit, you little rascal!"

"All right," said Paul.

At that the maid started heavily from the doorway. Just then a whistle piped shrilly. Paul went to the speaking-rule.

"Yes!" he said, and he listened. "Er—yes!" He listened, then he laughed. "I'll come down directly. I've got a visitor just now."

Dawes knew from his tone that he had been speaking to Clara. He stepped forward.

"You little devil!" he said. "I'll visit you, inside of two minutes! Think I'm goin' to have you whippy-snappled round?"

The other clerk in the warehouse looked up. Paul's office-boy appeared, holding some white article.

"Fanny says you could have had it last night if you'd let her know," he said.

"All right," answered Paul, looking at the stocking. "Get it off."

Dawes stood frustrated, helpless with rage. Mabel turned round.

"Because not a minute," he said to Dawes, and he would have run downstairs.

"By God, I'll stop your gallop!" shouted the maid, seizing him by the arm. He turned quickly.

"Hay! hay!" said the office-boy, alarmed.

Thomas Jordan started out of his little glass office, and came running down the room.

"What's a-matter, what's a-matter?" he said, in his old man's sharp voice.

"I've just goin' to settle this little——, that's all," said Dawes desperately.

"What do you mean?" snapped Thomas Jordan.

"What I say," said Dawes, but he hung fire.

Mabel was leaning against the counter, shivered, half-groaning.

"What's it all about?" snapped Thomas Jordan.

"Couldn't say," said Paul, shaking his head and shrugging his shoulders.

"Couldn't yer, couldn't yer!" cried Dawes, thrusting forward his handsome, baritone face, and squaring his fist.

"Have you finished?" cried the old man, vibrating. "Get off about your business, and don't come here tippy in the morning."

Dawes turned his big frame slowly upon him.

"Tippy!" he said. "What's tippy? I'm no more tippy than *you* are!"

"We've heard that song before," snapped the old man. "Now you get off, and don't be long about it. Come! *hurry* with your readying."

The smith looked down contemptuously on his employee. His hands, large, and grimy, and yet well shaped for his labour, worked rapidly. Paul remembered that were the hands of Clara's husband, and a flash of hate went through him.

"Get out before you're turned out!" snapped Thomas Jordan.

"Tippy, what'll *turn* me out?" said Dawes, beginning to move.

Mr. Jordan started, marched up to the smith, waving him off, thrusting his stout bulk before at the man, saying:

"Get off my premises—get off!"

He seized and twisted Dawes' arm.

"Come off!" said the smith, and with a jerk of the elbow he sent the little manufacturer staggering backwards.

Before anyone could help him, Thomas Jordan had collided with the heavy spring-door. It had given way, and he was crash down the half-dozen steps into Fawcett's room. There was a second of amazement: then men and girls were running. Dawes stood a moment looking bitterly on the scene, then he took his departure.

Thomas Jordan was shaken and bruised, not otherwise hurt. He was, however, beside himself with rage. He dismissed Dawes from his employment, and threatened him for assault.

At the trial Paul Mowbray had to give evidence. Asked how the trouble began, he said:

"Dawes took occasion to insult Mrs. Dawes and me because I accompanied her to the theatre one evening; then I threw some beer at him, and he wanted his revenge."

"Clara was present?" smiled the magistrate.

The case was dismissed after the magistrates had told Dawes he thought him a dunce.

"You gave the case away," snapped Mr. Jordan to Paul.

"I don't think I did," replied the latter. "Besides, you didn't really want a conviction, did you?"

"What do you think I took the case up for?"

"Well," said Paul, "I'm sorry if I said the wrong thing."

Clara was also very angry.

"Why need up come have been dragged in?" she said.

"Better speak it openly than leave it to be whispered."

"There was no need for anything at all," she declared.

"We are past the power," he said indifferently.

"You may not be," she said.

"And you?" he asked.

"I need never have been unveiled."

"I'm sorry," he said; but he did not sound sorry.

He told himself sadly: "She will come round." And she did. He told his mother about the fall of Mr. Jordan and the trial of Dawes. Mrs. Morel watched him closely.

"And what do you think of it all?" she asked him.

"I think he's a fool," he said.

But he was very uncomfortable, nevertheless.

"Have you ever considered where it will end?" his mother said.

"No," he answered; "things work out of themselves."

"They do, in a way one doesn't like, as a rule," said his mother.

"And then one has to put up with them," he said.

"You'll find you're not as good at 'putting up' as you imagine," she said.

He went on working rapidly at his design.

"Do you ever ask her opinion?" she said at length.

"What of?"

"Of you, and the whole thing."

"I don't care what her opinion of me is. She's fearfully in love with me, but it's not very deep."

"But quite as deep as your feeling for her."

He looked up at his mother curiously.

"Yes," he said. "You know, mother, I think there must be something the matter with me, that I can't love. When she's there, as a rule, I do love her. Sometimes, when I see her just as she is, I love her, madly; but then, when she talks and behaves, I often don't know to her."

"Yet she's as much wiser as Miriam."

"Perhaps; and I love her better than Miriam. But why don't they hold me?"

The last question was almost a lamentation. His mother turned away her face, not looking across the room, very quiet, grave, with something of consternation.

"But you wouldn't want to marry Clara?" she said.

"No; at first perhaps I would. But why—why don't I want to marry her or anybody? I feel sometimes as if I wronged my women, mother."

"How wronged them, my son?"

"I don't know."

He went on pointing rather despairingly; he had touched the quick of the trouble.

"And as for wanting to marry," said his mother, "there's plenty of time yet."

"But no, mother. I even love Clara, and I did Miriam; but to give myself to them in marriage I couldn't. I couldn't belong to them. They seem to want me, and I can't ever give it to them."

"You haven't met the right woman."

"And I never shall meet the right woman while you live," he said.

She was very quiet. Now she began to feel again tired, as if she were alone.

"We'll see, my son," she answered.

The feeling that things were going in a circle made him mad.

Clara was, indeed, passionately in love with him, and he with her, as far as passion went. In the daytime he found her a good deal. She was working in the same building, but he was not aware of it. He was busy, and her existence was of no matter to him. But all the time she was in her spirit, even she had a sense that he was upstairs, a physical sense of his person in the same building. Every second she expected him to come through the door, and when he came it was a shock to her. But he was often short and offhand with her. He gave her his directions in an official manner, keeping her at bay. With what with she had left she listened to him. She dared not misinterpret or fail to remember, but it was a cruelty to her. She wanted to touch his chest. She knew exactly how his breast was shaped under the waistcoat, and she wanted to touch it. It reminded her to hear his mechanical voice giving orders about the work. She wanted to break through the chain of it, smash the trivial coating of business which covered him, with hardness, get at the man again; but she was afraid, and before she could feel one touch of his warmth he was gone, and she ached again.

He knew that she was solitary every evening she did not see him, so he gave her a good deal of his time. The days were often a misery to her, but the evenings and the nights were usually a bliss to them both. Then they were silent. For hours they sat together, or walked together in the dark, and talked only a few, almost meaningless words. But he had his hand in his, and her breast left its warmth in his chest, making him feel whole.

One evening they were walking down by the canal, and something was troubling him. She knew she had not got him. All the

she he whistled softly and persistently to himself. She listened, feeling she could learn more from his whistling than from his speech. It was a sad, dissatisfied tone—a tone that made her feel he would not stay with her. She walked on in silence. When they came to the swing bridge he sat down on the great pole, looking at the start in the water. He was a long way from her. She had been thinking.

"Will you always stay at Jordan?" she asked.

"No," he answered without reflecting. "No; I'll leave Nottingham and go abroad—soon."

"Go abroad! What for?"

"I don't know. I feel restless."

"But what shall you do?"

"I shall have to get some steady designing work, and some sort of sale for my pictures first," he said. "I am gradually making my way. I know I am."

"And when do you think you'll go?"

"I don't know. I shall hardly go for long, while I can't see mother."

"You couldn't leave her?"

"Not for long."

She looked at the stars in the black water. They lay very white and swirling. It was an agony to know he would leave her, but it was almost an agony to have him near her.

"And if you made a nice lot of money, what would you do?" she asked.

"Go somewhere in a pretty house near London with my mother."

"I see."

There was a long pause.

"I could still come and see you," he said. "I don't know. Don't ask me what I should do; I don't know."

There was a silence. The stars shimmered and broke upon the water. There came a breath of wind. He went suddenly to her, and put his hand on her shoulder.

"Don't tell me anything about the future," he said solemnly.

"I don't know anything. He will see now, will you, no matter what it is?"

And she took him in her arms. After all, she was a married woman, and she had no right even to what he gave her. He needed her badly. She had him in her arms, and he was miserable. With her weakness she folded him over, comforted him, loved him. She would let the woman stand for itself.

After a moment he lifted his head as if he wanted to speak.

"Class," he said struggling.

She caught him passionately to her, pressed his head down on her breast with her hands. She could not hear the tolling in his voice. She was afraid in her soul. He might have anything of her—anything: but she did not want to lose. She felt she could not hear it. She wanted him to be smothered upon her—smothered. She stood claying him and carrying him, and he was something unknown to her—something almost unsteady. She wanted to smother him into forgetfulness.

And soon the struggle went down in his soul, and he forgot. But when Clara was not there for him, only a woman, woman, something he loved and almost worshipped, there in the dark. But it was not Clara, and she submitted to him. The naked hunger and inevitability of his loving her, something strong and kind and mysterious in its primitiveness, made the hour almost terrible to her. She knew how stark and alone he was, and she felt it was great that he came to her; and she took him simply because his need was bigger either than her or him, and her soul was still within her. She did this for him in his need even if he left her, for she loved him.

All the while the poems were screaming in the field. When he came to, he wondered what was near his eyes, surging and strong with life in the dark, and what voice it was speaking. Then he realized it was the grass, and the poem was talking. The warmth was Clara's breathing heaving. He lifted his head, and looked into her eyes. They were dark and thinning and strange, life wild as the waves surging into his life, stranger to him, yet meeting him; and he put his face down on her throat, afraid. What was she? A strong, strange, wild life, that trembled with his in the darkness through this hour. It was all so much bigger than themselves that he was hushed. They had met, and included in the meeting the thrust of the manifold great-rooms, the cry of the poem, the wheel of the stars.

When they stood up they saw other lovers standing down the opposite hedge. It seemed natural they were there; the night contained them.

And after such an evening they both were very still, having known the transiency of passion. They felt small, half afraid, childish, and wondering like Adam and Eve when they lose their innocence and realize the magnificence of the power which drives them out of Paradise and across the great night and the great day of humanity. It was for each of them an initiation and a satisfaction. To know their own nothingness, to know the tremendous living flood which carried them always, gave them rest within themselves.

If so great a magnificent power could overwhelm them, identify them altogether with itself, so that they knew they were only grains in the tremendous leaves that filled every grain/blade in life, bright, and every tree, and living thing, then why list about themselves? They could let themselves be carried by life, and they felt a sort of peace such in the other. There was a verification which they had had together. Nothing could destroy it, nothing could take it away; it was always their belief in life.

But Clara was not satisfied. Something great was there, she knew; something great enveloped her. But it did not keep her. In the morning it was not the same. They had known, but she could not keep this vision. She wanted it again; she wanted something permanent. She had not realized fully. She thought it was he whom she wanted. He was not safe to her. This that had been between them might never be again; he might leave her. She had not got him; she was not satisfied. She had been there, but she had not gripped the—*the something*—she knew not what—*which she was made to have.*

In the evening he had considerable peace, and was happy in himself. It seemed almost as if he had known the happiness of her in passion, and it left him at rest. But it was not Clara. It was something that happened because of her, but it was not her. They were scarcely any nearer each other. It was as if they had been blind agents of a great force.

When she saw him that day at the factory her heart ached like a drop of fire. It was his body, his bones. The drop of fire grew larger in her bones; she must hold him. But he, very quiet, very subdued this morning, went on giving his instructions. She followed him into the dark, ugly basement, and stood her arms to him. He kissed her, and the intensity of passion began to burn him again. Somebody was at the door. He ran upstairs; she remained in her room, moaning as if in a trance.

After that the fire slowly went down. He felt more and more that his experience had been impersonal, and not Clara. He loved her. There was a big tenderness, as after a strong emotion they had known together; but it was not she who could keep his soul steady. He had wanted her to be something she could not be.

And she was read with desire of him. She could not see him without touching him. In the factory, as he talked to her about spinal haws, she ran her hand secretly along his side. She followed him out from the basement for a quick kiss; her eyes, always moist and yearning, full of restrained passion, she kept fixed on his. He was afraid of her, but she could too sagaciously give herself away before the other girls. She invariably smiled for him at

dinner-time for him to embrace her before she went. He felt as if she were helpless, almost a burden to him, and it irritated him.

"But what do you always want to be kissing and embracing for?" he said. "Surely there's a time for everything."

She looked up at him, and the tears came into her eyes.

"Do I always want to be kissing you?" she said.

"Always, even if I came to ask you about the work. I don't want anything to do with love when I'm at work. Work's work."

"And what is love?" she asked. "Has it to have special hours?"

"Yes; out of work hours."

"And you'll regulate it according to Mr. Jordan's clocking time?"

"Yes; and according to the freedom from business of any sort."

"It is only to exist in spare time?"

"That's all, and not always then—not the kissing sort of love."

"And that's all you think of it?"

"It's quite enough."

"I'm glad you think so."

And she was cold to him for some time—she hated him; and while she was cold and unresponsive, he was uneasy till she had forgiven him again. But when they started afresh they were not any nearer. He kept her because he never satisfied her.

In the spring they went together to the coast. They had rooms at a little cottage near Theddlethorpe, and lived so near and with Mrs. Radford sometimes went with them.

It was known in Nottingham that Paul Mord and Mrs. Dawson were going together, but as nothing was very obvious, and Clara was always a military person, and he seemed so simple and innocent, it did not make much difference.

He loved the Lincolnshire coast, and she loved the sea. In the early morning they often went out together in bathos. The grey of the dawn, the flat, desolate reaches of the inland eastern plain winter, the sea-meadows rank with herbage, were much enough to rejoice his soul. As they stepped on to the highest of their glass bridge, and looked round at the endless monotony of beach, the land a little darker than the sky, the sea swirling small beyond the wreath, his heart filled strong with the sweeping release of life. She loved him then. He was military and strong, and his eyes had a beautiful light.

They shuddered with cold; then he raced her down the road to the green turf bridge. She could run well. Her colour came, her throat was bare, her eyes shone. He loved her for being so luxuriously heavy, and yet so quick. Himself was lighter; she

went with a beautiful rain. They grew warm, and walked hand in hand.

A flash came into the sky, the vast moon, half-way down the west, sank into insignificance. On the shadowy land things began to take life, plants with great leaves became distinct. They came through a pass in the big, cold worldliness on to the beach. The long waste of forbearance lay mourning under the stars and the sea; the ocean was a flat dark strip with a white edge. Over the gloomy sea the sky grew red. Quickly the fire spread among the clouds and scattered them. Crispen burned to orange, orange to dull gold, and in a golden glare the sun came up, debbling fiercely over the waves in little splashes, as if someone had gone along and the light had spilled from her palm as she walked.

The breakers ran down the shore in long, loose strokes. Tiny seaulls, like specks of spray, wheeled above the line of surf. Their crying seemed longer than they. Far away the coast stretched out, and melted into the evening, the heavily sandhills seemed to sink to a level with the beach. Martlets came they on their right. They had above the space of all this land above the sea, and the upcoming sun, the silver notes of the women, the sharp crying of the gulls.

They had a woman below in the sandhills where the wind did not come. He stood looking out to sea.

"It's very fine," he said.

"Now don't get sentimental," she said.

It irritated her to see him standing gazing at the sea, like a seafarer and poetic person. He laughed. She quickly undressed.

"There are some fine waves this morning," she said triumphantly.

She was a better swimmer than he; he stood idly watching her.

"Aren't you coming?" she said.

"In a minute," he answered.

She was white and velvet skinned, with heavy shoulders. A little wind, coming from the sea, blew across her body and ruffled her hair.

The morning was of a lovely limpid gold colour. Vells of shadow seemed to be drifting away on the north wall the north. Clara stood shrinking slightly from the touch of the wind, twisting her hair. The sea-grass rust behind the white striped woman. She glanced at the sea, then looked at him. He was watching her with dark eyes which she loved and could not understand. She hugged her breasts between her arms, clasping, hugging:

"Oh, it will be so cold!" she said.

He bent forward and kissed her, held her suddenly close, and

closed her again. She stood waiting. He looked into her eyes, then away at the pale sands.

"Oh, then!" he said quietly.

She flung her arms round his neck, drew him against her, kissed him passionately, and went, saying:

"But you'll come in?"

"In a minute."

She went plodding heavily over the sand that was soft as velvet. He, on the sandhills, watched the great pain come sweeping late. She grew smaller, less proportion, seemed only like a large white bird sailing forward.

"Not much more than a big white pebble on the beach, not much more than a disc of - a being blown and rolled over the sand," he said to himself.

She seemed to move very slowly across the vast surrounding dunes. As he watched, he lost her. She was dashed out of sight by the sunshine. Again, he saw her, the nearest white speck moving against the white, shimmering sea-edge.

"Look how little she is!" he said to himself. "She's lost like a grain of sand in the beach—just a consciousness quick blown along, a tiny white foam-bubble, almost nothing among the morning. Why does she attract me?"

The morning was altogether uninterrupted: she was gone in the water. Far and wide the beach, the sandhills with their blue margins, the shining water, glowed together in immense, unbroken silence.

"What is she, after all?" he said to himself. "Here's the sea-coast morning, big and permanent and beautiful; there is she, flitting, always unmissed, and temporary as a bubble of foam. What does she mean to me, after all? She represents something, like a bubble of foam represents the sea. But what is she? It's not her I care for."

Then, startled by his own unconscious thoughts, that seemed to speak so distinctly that all the morning could hear, he understood and ran quickly down the sands. She was waiting for him. Her arms flung up to him, she heaved on a wave, coloured, her shoulder in a pool of liquid silver. He jumped through the breakers, and in a moment her hand was on his shoulder.

He was a poor swimmer, and could not stay long in the water. She played round him in triumph, sporting with her superiority, which he recognised her. The sunshine stood deep and fine on the water. They laughed in the sea for a minute or two, then stood each other back on the sandhills.

When they were drying themselves, panting heavily, he watched

her laughing, breathless face, her bright shoulders, her breasts that quayed and made him frightened as she rolled there, and he thought again:

"But she is magnificent, and more bigger than the morning and the sea. Is she—? Is she—?"

She, seeing his dark eyes fixed on her, broke off from her drying with a laugh.

"What are you looking at?" she said.

"You," he answered, laughing.

Her eyes met his, and in a moment he was kissing her white "goose-fleshed" shoulder, and thinking:

"What is she? What is she?"

She loved him in the morning. There was something detached, hard, and elemental about his kisses then, as if he were only conscious of his own will, not in the least of her and her wanting him.

Later in the day he went out sketching.

"Yes," he said to her, "go with your mother to Sutton. I am so dull."

She stood and looked at him. He knew she wanted to come with him, but he preferred to be alone. She made him feel imprisoned when she was there, as if he could not get a free deep breath, as if there were something on top of him. She felt his desire to be free of her.

In the evening he came back to her. They walked down the shore in the darkness, then sat for awhile in the shelter of the sandhills.

"It seems," she said, as they stared over the darkness of the sea, where no light was to be seen—"It seemed as if you only loved me at night—as if you didn't love me in the daytime."

He ran the cold sand through his fingers, feeling guilty under the accusation.

"The night is free to you," he replied. "In the daytime I want to be by myself."

"But why?" she said. "Why, even now, when we are on this short holiday?"

"I don't know. Love-making with me is the daytime."

"But it needn't always be love-making," she said.

"It always is," he answered, "when you and I are together." She sat feeling very bitter.

"Do you ever want to marry me?" he asked carefully.

"Do you not?" she replied.

"Yes, yes. I should like us to have children," he answered slowly.

She sat with her head bent, fingering the sand.

"But you don't really want a divorce from Baxter, do you?" he said.

It was some minutes before she replied.

"No," she said, very deliberately; "I don't think I do."

"Why?"

"I don't know."

"Do you feel as if you belonged to him?"

"No; I don't think so."

"What, then?"

"I think he belongs to me," she replied.

He was silent for some minutes, listening to the wind blowing over the house, dark sea.

"And you never really intended to belong to me?" he said.

"Yes, I do belong to you," she answered.

"No," he said; "because you don't want to be divorced."

It was a knot they could not untie, so they ask it, took what they could get, and what they could not attain they ignored.

"I consider you trusted Baxter recently," he said another time.

He had expected Clara to answer him, as his mother would: "You consider your own affairs, and don't know so much about other people's." But she took him seriously, almost to his own surprise.

"Why?" she said.

"I suppose you thought he was a lily of the valley, and so you put him in an appropriate pot, and tended him accordingly. You made up your mind he was a lily of the valley, and it was no good his being a cow-parsnip. You wouldn't have it."

"I certainly never imagined him a lily of the valley."

"You imagined him something he wasn't. That's just what a woman is. She thinks she knows what's good for a man, and she's going to see he gets it; and no matter if he's moving, he may sit and whistle for what he needs, while she's got him, and is giving him what's good for him."

"And what are you doing?" she asked.

"I'm thinking what tune I shall whistle," he laughed.

And instead of looking his ears, she considered him in earnest.

"You think I want to give you what's good for you?" she asked.

"I hope so; but how should give a steer of freedom, out of prison. Miracles made me feel shut up like a donkey to a stable. I must find an old patch, and somewhere else. It's ghastly!"

"And would you let a woman do as she likes?"

"Yes; I'd say that she likes to love me. If she doesn't—well, I don't hold her."

"If you were as wonderful as you say——," replied Clara.

"I should be the marvel I am," he laughed.

There was a silence in which they hated each other, though they laughed.

"Love's a dog in the manger," he said.

"And which of us is the dog?" she asked.

"Oh well, you, of course."

So there went on a battle between them. She knew she never fully had him. Some part, big and vital to him, she had no hold over; nor did she ever try to get it, as even to realize what it was. And he knew in some way that she held herself still to him, Dawes. She did not love Dawes, never had loved him; but she believed he loved her, at least depended on her. She felt a certain anxiety about him that she never felt with Paul Morel. Her passion for the young man had filled her soul, given her a certain satisfaction, saved her off her self-mistrust, her doubts. Whatever she was, she was inwardly assured. It was almost as if she had gained herself, and stood now distinct and complete. She had received her confirmation; but she never believed that her life belonged to Paul Morel, nor his to her. They would separate in the end, and the rest of her life would be an ache after him. But at any rate, she knew now, she was sure of herself. And the same could almost be said of him. Together they had received the baptism of life, each through the other; but now their missions were separate. Whom he wanted to go she could not come with him. They would have to part sooner or later. Even if they married, and were faithful to each other, still he would have to leave her, go on alone, and she would only have to attend to him when he came home. But it was not possible. Each wanted a man to go side by side with.

Clara had gone to live with her mother upon Mapplegate Plains. One evening, as Paul and she were walking along Woodborough Road, they met Dawes. Morel knew something about the hearing of the man approaching, but he was absorbed in his thinking at the moment, so that only his artist's eye watched the form of the stranger. Then he suddenly turned to Clara with a laugh, and put his hand on her shoulder, saying, laughing:

"But we walk side by side, and yet I'm in London arguing with an imaginary Oprew; and where are you?"

At that instant Dawes passed, almost touching Morel. The young man glanced, saw the dark brows open burning, full of hate and yet tired.

"Who was that?" he asked of Clara.

"It was Baxter," she replied.

Paul took his hand from her shoulder and glanced round; then

he saw again distinctly the man's form as it approached him. Dawson still walked erect, with his fine shoulders flung back, and his face tilted; but there was a lurking look in his eyes that gave one the impression he was trying to get unnoticed past every person he met, glancing suspiciously to see what they thought of him. And his hands seemed to be wanting to hide. His worn old clothes, the pockets worn torn at the knees, and the handkerchief tied round his throat was dirty; but his cap was still defiantly over one eye. As the two men, Clara felt pity. There was a tiredness and despair on his face that made her hate him, because it hurt her.

"He looks sturdy," said Paul.

But the note of pity in his voice repulsed her, and made her feel hard.

"His nose certainly comes out," she answered.

"Do you hate him?" he asked.

"You talk," she said, "about the cruelty of women; I wish you knew the cruelty of men in their brute force. They simply don't know that the women suffer."

"Don't I?" he said.

"No," she answered.

"Don't I know you well?"

"About me you know nothing," she said bitterly—"about me!"

"Not more than Baxter knows?" he asked.

"Perhaps not so much."

He felt puzzled, and helpless, and angry. There she walked unknown to him, though they had been through such experiences together.

"But you know me pretty well," he said.

She did not answer.

"Did you know Baxter as well as you know me?" he asked.

"He wouldn't let me," she said.

"And I have let you know me?"

"It's what men won't let you do. They won't let you get really close to them," she said.

"And haven't I let you?"

"Yes," she answered slowly; "but you've never come near to me. You can't strike me of yourself, you can't. Baxter could do that better than you."

He walked on pondering. He was angry with her for preferring Baxter to him.

"You begin to value Baxter now you've not got him," he said.

"No; I can only see where he was different from you."

But he felt she had a grudge against him.

One evening, as they were coming home over the fields, she startled him by asking:

"Do you think it's worth it—the one part?"

"The act of loving, itself?"

"Yes; is it worth anything to you?"

"But how can you separate it?" he said. "It's the culmination of everything. All our imaginary calculations then."

"Not for me," she said.

He was silent. A flash of hate for her came up. After all, she was dissatisfied with him, even there, where he thought they fulfilled each other. But he believed her too implicitly.

"I feel," she continued slowly, "as if I hadn't got you, as if all of you weren't there, and as if it weren't as you were asking——"

"What, then?"

"Something just for yourself. It has been that, so that I don't think of it. But is it as you want, or is it?"

He again felt guilty. Did he leave Clara out of account, and take simply women? But he thought that was splitting a hair.

"When I had Barton, actually had him, then I did feel as if I had all of him," she said.

"And it was better?" he asked.

"Yes, yes; it was more whole. I don't say you haven't given me more than he ever gave me."

"Or could give you."

"Yes, perhaps; but you've never given me yourself."

He knitted his brows angrily.

"If I start to make love to you," he said, "I just go like a leaf down the wind."

"And leave me out of account," she said.

"And then is it nothing to you?" he asked, almost rigid with despair.

"It's something; and sometimes you have carried me away—right away—I know—and I reverence you for it—but——"

"Doesn't that mean," he said, kissing her quickly, as a fire ran through him.

She submitted, and was silent.

It was true as he said. As a rule, when he started love-making, the sensation was strong enough to carry with it everything—reason, and, indeed—in a great way, like the Tibet carrier boldly its back-wards and interwindings, mindlessly. Gradually the little criticisms, the little sensations, were lost, thought also went, everything borne along in one flow. He became, not a man with a mind, but a great instinct. His hands were like creatures,

living; his limbs, his body, were all life and consciousness, subject to no will of his, but living in themselves. Just as he was, so it seemed the vigorous, wintry stars were strong also with life. He said they struck with the same pulse of fire, and the same joy of strength which held the handless-bound as if near his eyes held his own body firm. It was so (fire, and the stars, and the dark herbage, and Clara were lifted up in an immense finger of flame, which tore upwards and upwards. Everything rushed along in living beside him; everything was still, perfect in itself, along with him. This wonderful stillness in each thing in itself, while it was being borne along in a very mystery of living, seemed the highest point of bliss.

And Clara knew this held him to her, so she trusted altogether to the passion. It, however, failed her very often. They did not often reach again the height of that once when the passions had called. Gradually some mechanical effort spoils their loving, or, when they had spiritual moments, they had them separately, and not so satisfactorily. So often he seemed merely to be running on alone; when they realised it had been a failure, not what they had wanted. He left her, knowing that evening had only made a little split between them. Their loving grew more mechanical, without the marvellous glances. Gradually they began to introduce nervousness, to get back some of the feeling of satisfaction. They would be very near, almost dangerously near to the river, so that the black water ran not far from his face, and it gave a little thrill; or they loved sometimes in a little hollow below the fence of the path where people were passing occasionally, on the edge of the town, and they heard footsteps coming, almost felt the vibration of the tread, and they heard what the passers-by said—strange little things that were never intended to be heard. And afterwards each of them was rather ashamed, and those things caused a distance between the two of them. He began to distrust her a little, as if she mocked it!

One night he left her to go to Daybrook Station over the fields. It was very dark, with an attempt at snow, although the spring was so far advanced. Marcel had not much time; he plunged forward. The town seemed almost abruptly on the edge of a steep hollow; above the houses with their yellow lights stood up against the darkness. He went over the stile, and dropped quickly into the hollow of the fields. Under the orchard one warm window shone in Switzerland Farm. Paul glanced round. Behind, the houses, moved on the brink of the dip, black against the sky, like wild boats gliding curiously with yellow eyes down into the darkness. It was the town that seemed strange and unusual, glaring on the

clouds at the back of him. Some trees appeared under the willows of the farm pond. It was too dark to distinguish anything.

He was close up to the next stile before he saw a dark shape leaning against it. The man moved aside.

"Good-evening!" he said.

"Good-evening!" Morel answered, not noticing.

"Paul Morel?" said the man.

Then he knew it was Dawes. The man stopped his way.

"I've got yer, have I?" he said awkwardly.

"I shall miss my tools," said Paul.

He could see nothing of Dawes' face. The man's words seemed to chatter as he talked.

"You're going to get it from me now," said Dawes.

Morel attempted to move forward; the other man stopped in front of him.

"Are yer goin' to take that top-coat off?" he said, "or are yer goin' to lie down to it?"

Paul was afraid the man was mad.

"But," he said, "I don't know how to fight."

"All right, then," answered Dawes, and before the younger man knew where he was he was staggering backwards from a blow against the fence.

The whole night went black. He torn off his overcoat and coat, dodging a blow, and flung the garments over Dawes. The latter wore nothing. Morel, in his shirt-sleeves, was now silent and furious. He felt his whole body unshackled itself like a claw. He could not fight, so he would use his wits. The other man became more distinct to him; he could see particularly the shirt-bowst. Dawes stumbled over Paul's coat, then came rushing forward. The young man's mouth was bleeding. It was the other man's mouth he was dying to get at, and the desire was enough in its strength. He stepped quickly through the stile, and as Dawes was coming through after him like a flash he got a blow in over the other's mouth. He disarmed with pleasure. Dawes advanced slowly, spinning. Paul was afraid; he moved round to get to the stile again. Suddenly, from out of nowhere, came a great blow against his ear, that sent him falling helpless backwards. He heard Dawes' heavy panting, like a wild beast's; then came a kick on the knee, giving him such agony that he got up and, quite blind, kept down under his enemy's guard. He felt blows and kicks, but they did not hurt. He hung on to the bigger man like a wild cat, till at last Dawes fell with a crash, losing his presence of mind. Paul went down with him. Paul instinct brought his hands to the man's neck, and before Dawes, in frenzy and agony, could wrench

him free, he had got his feet refixed in the scarf and his knuckles dug in the throat of the other man. He was a pure instinct, without reason or feeling. His body, hard and wonderful in itself, closed against the struggling body of the other man; not a muscle in him relaxed. He was quite unconscious, only his body had taken upon itself to kill this other man. For himself, he had neither feeling nor reason. He lay passed hand against his adversary, his body adjusting itself to its one pure purpose of choking the other man, emitting exactly at the right moment, with exactly the right amount of strength, the struggles of the elbow, ideas, intent, unchanging, gradually pressing its knuckles deeper, feeling the struggles of the other body become wilder and more frenzied. Tighter and tighter grew his body, like a screw that is gradually increasing its pressure, till something breaks.

Then suddenly he relaxed, full of wonder and mingling. Daves had been yielding. Mori felt his body flame with pain, as he realized what he was doing; he was all bewildered. Daves's struggles suddenly resumed themselves in a furious spasm. Paul's hands were writhed, torn out of the scarf in which they were knotted, and he was flying away, helpless. He heard the horrid sound of the other's gasping, but he lay stunned; then, still dazed, he felt the blows of the other's feet, and lost consciousness.

Daves, grunting with pain like a beast, was kicking the prostrate body of his rival. Suddenly the whistle of the train shrieked two fields away. He turned round and glanced suspiciously. What was coming? He saw the light of the train draw across his vision. It seemed to him people were approaching. He made off across the field into Nottingham, and dully in his consciousness as he went, he felt on his feet the place where his foot had knocked against one of the last's bones. The knock seemed to re-echo inside him; he hurried to get away from it.

Mori gradually came to himself. He knew where he was and what had happened, but he did not want to move. He lay still, with tiny bits of snow sticking his face. It was pleasant to lie quiet, quite still. The time passed. It was the bits of snow that kept rousing him when he did not want to be roused. At last he felt choked into action.

"I meann't lie here," he said; "it's silly."

But still he did not move.

"I said I was going to get up," he repeated. "Why don't I?"

And still it was some time before he had sufficiently pulled himself together to stir; then gradually he got up. Pain made him sick and dazed, but his brain was clear. Reeling, he groped for his coat and got them on, buttoning his overcoat up to his ears.

It was some time before he found his cap. He did not know whether his face was still bleeding. Walking blindly, every step making him sick with pain, he went back to the pond and washed his face and hands. The icy water hurt, but helped to bring him back to himself. He crawled back up the hill to the trees. He wanted to get to his mother—he must get to his mother—that was his blind intention. He covered his face as much as he could, and struggled slowly along. Continually the ground seemed to fall away from him as he walked, and he felt himself dropping with a sickening feeling into space; so, like a nightmare, he got through with the journey home.

Everybody was in bed. He looked at himself. His face was discolored and smeared with blood, almost like a dead man's face. He washed it, and went to bed. The night went by in delirium. In the morning he found his mother looking at him. Her blue eyes—they were all he wanted to see. She was there; he was in her hands.

"It's not much, mother," he said. "It was Baxter Down."

"Tell me where it hurts you," she said quietly.

"I don't know—my shoulder. Say it was a bicycle accident, mother."

He could not move his arm. Presently Miriam, the little servant came upstairs with some tea.

"Your mother's nearly frightened me out of my wits—fainted away," she said.

He felt he could not bear it. His mother cursed him; he told her about it.

"And now I should have done with them all," she said quietly.

"I will, mother."

She comforted him up.

"And don't think about it," she said—"only try to go to sleep. The doctor won't be here till eleven."

He had a dislocated shoulder, and the second day some bandage was on it. His mother was pale as death now, and very thin. She would sit and look at him, then away into space. There was something between them that neither dared mention. Class came to see him. Afterwards he said to his mother:

"She makes me tired, mother."

"Yes; I wish she wouldn't come," Mrs. Moor replied.

Another day Miriam came, but she seemed almost like a stranger to him.

"You know, I don't care about them, mother," he said.

"I'm afraid you don't, my son," she replied sadly.

It was given out everywhere it was a bicycle accident. Soon he

was able to go to work again, but now there was a constant sickness and gnawing at his heart. He went to Clara, but there seemed, as it were, nobody there. He could not work. He and his mother seemed almost to avoid each other. There was some quarrel between them which they could not bear. He was not aware of it. He only knew that his life seemed unbalanced, as if it were going to smash into pieces.

Clara did not know what was the matter with him. She realised that he seemed unaware of her. Even when he came to her he seemed unaware of her; always he was somewhere else. She felt that was clanking for him, and he was somewhere else. It tortured her, and so she tortured him. For a month at a time she kept him at arm's length. He almost hated her, and was driven to her in spite of himself. He went mostly from the company of men, was always at the George or the White Horse. His mother was ill, distant, quiet, shadowy. He was terrified of something; he dared not look at her. Her eyes seemed to grow darker, her face more veiled, and she dragged about at her work.

At Whittrickside he said he would go to Blackpool for four days with his friend Newton. The latter was a big, jolly fellow, with a touch of the boulder about him. Paul said his mother must go to Sheffield to stay a week with Annie, who lived there. Perhaps the change would do her good. Mrs. Morel was strolling a woman's dinner in Nottingham. He said her heart and her digestion were wrong. She consented to go to Sheffield, though she did not want to; but now she would do everything her son wished of her. Paul said he would come for her on the fifth day, and stay also in Sheffield till the holiday was up. It was agreed.

The two young men set off gaily for Blackpool. Mrs. Morel was quite lonely as Paul kissed her and left her. Once at the station, he forgot everything. Four days were close—not an anxiety, not a thought. The two young men simply enjoyed themselves. Paul was like another man. None of himself remained—no Clara, no Miriam, no mother that tormented him. He wrote to them all, and long letters to his mother; but they were jolly letters that made her laugh. He was having a good time, as young fellows will in a place like Blackpool. And underneath it all was a shadow for her.

Paul was very gay, cocked at the thought of staying with his mother in Sheffield. Newton was to spend the day with them. Their train was late. Joking, laughing, with their pipes between their teeth, the young men tossed their bags on to the train-car. Paul had bought his mother a fine collar of real lace that he wanted to see her wear, so that he could tease her about it.

Annie lived in a nice house, and had a little maid. Paul was gaily up the steps. He expected his mother laughing in the hall, but it was Annie who opened to him. She seemed distant to him. He stood a second in dismay. Annie let him kiss her cheek.

"Is my mother ill?" he said.

"Yes; that's not very well. Don't upset her."

"Is she in bed?"

"Yes."

And then the queer feeling went over him, as if all the sunshine had gone out of him, and it was all shadow. He dropped the bag and ran upstairs. Hastening, he opened the door. His mother sat up in bed, wearing a dressing-gown of old rose colour. She looked at him almost as if she were ashamed of herself, pleading so him, humble. He saw the ugly look about her.

"Mother!" he said.

"I thought you were never coming," she answered gaily.

But he only fell on his knees at the bedside, and buried his face in the bedclothes, crying in agony, and saying:

"Mother—mother—mother!"

She stroked his hair slowly with her thin hand.

"Don't cry," she said. "Don't cry—it's nothing."

But he felt as if his blood was melting into tears, and he cried in terror and pain.

"Don't—don't cry," his mother faltered.

Slowly she stroked his hair. Shocked out of himself, he cried, and the tears hurt in every fibre of his body. Suddenly he stopped, but he dared not lift his face out of the bedclothes.

"You are late. Where have you been?" his mother asked.

"The train was late," he replied, muffled in the sheet.

"Yes; that excellent General! Is Newton come?"

"Yes."

"I'm sure you must be hungry, and they've kept dinner waiting."

With a wrench he looked up at her.

"What is it, mother?" he asked brutally.

She averted his eyes as she answered:

"Only a bit of a rumour, my boy. You needn't trouble. It's been there—the lump has—long time."

Up came the tears again. His mind was clear and hard, but his body was crying.

"Where?" he said.

She put her hand on her side.

"Here. But you know they can send a rumour away."

He stood looking dumb and helpless, like a child. He thought

perhaps it was as she said. Yet, he reassured himself it was so. But all the while his blood and his body knew definitely what it was. He sat down on the bed, and took her hand. She had never had that one ring—her wedding-ring.

"When were you poorly?" he asked.

"It was yesterday it began," she answered automatically.

"Pain?"

"Yes; but not more than I've often had at home. I believe Dr. Ansell is an alarmist."

"You ought not to have travelled alone," he said, to himself more than to her.

"As if that had anything to do with it!" she answered quickly. They were silent for a while.

"Now go and have your dinner," she said. "You must be hungry."

"Have you had yours?"

"Yes; a beautiful one I had. Annie is good to me."

They talked a little while, then he went downstairs. He was very white and strained. Nowhere not in miserable sympathy.

After dinner he went into the study to help Annie to wash up. The little maid had gone on an errand.

"Is it really a tumour?" he asked.

Annie began to cry again.

"The pain she had yesterday—I never saw anybody suffer like it!" she cried. "Leonard ran for a messenger for Dr. Ansell, and when she'd got to bed she said to me: 'Annie, look at this lump on my side. I wonder what it is!' And there I looked, and I thought I should have dropped. Paul, as true as I'm here, it's a lump as big as my double fist. I said: 'Good gracious, mother, whenever did that come?' 'Why, child,' she said, 'it's been there a long time.' I thought I should have died, you Paul, I did. She's been having these pains for months at home, and nobody looking after her."

The train came to his stop, then died suddenly.

"But she's been consulting the doctor in Nottingham—and she never told me," he said.

"If I'd been at home," said Annie, "I should have seen for myself."

He felt like a man walking in uncertainties. In the afternoon he went to see the doctor. The latter was a shrewd, kindly man.

"But what is it?" he said.

The doctor looked at the young man, then knitted his fingers.

"It may be a large tumour which has formed in the membrane," he said slowly, "and which we may be able to make go away."

"Can't you operate?" asked Paul.

"Not there," replied the doctor.

"Are you sure?"

"Quite."

Paul meditated a while.

"Are you sure it's a tumour?" he asked. "Why did Dr. Jamieson in Nottingham never find out anything about it? She's been going to him for weeks, and he's treated her for heart and indigestion."

"Mrs. Morel never told Dr. Jamieson about the lumps," said the doctor.

"And do you think it's a tumour?"

"No, I am not sure."

"What else might it be? You asked my sister if there was cancer in the family. Might it be cancer?"

"I don't know."

"And what shall you do?"

"I should like an examination, with Dr. Jamieson."

"Then leave me."

"You must arrange about that. His fee wouldn't be less than ten guineas to come here from Nottingham."

"When would you like him to come?"

"I will call in this evening, and we will talk it over."

Paul went away, biting his lip.

His mother could come downstairs for tea, the doctor said. Harison went upstairs to help her. She wore the old-time dressing-gown that Leonard had given Anna, and, with a little colour in her face, was quite young again.

"But you look quite pretty in that," he said.

"Yes; they make me so free, I hardly know myself," she answered.

But when she stood up to walk, the colour went. Paul helped her, half-carrying her. At the top of the stairs she was gone. He lifted her up and carried her quickly downstairs; laid her on the couch. She was light and frail. Her feet looked as if she were dead, with the blue lips that tight. Her eyes opened—her blue unshining eyes—and she looked at him pleadingly, almost warning him to forgive her. She held hands to her lips, but her mouth would not open. All the time she watched him longingly. She was only sorry for him. The tears ran down his face without ceasing, but not a muscle moved. He was intent on getting a little bread-crumbs between her lips. Soon she was able to swallow a teaspoonful. She lay back, as dead. The tears continued to run down his face.

"But," she panted, "I'll go off. Don't cry!"

"I'm not doing," he said.

After a while she was better again. He was kneeling beside the couch. They looked into each other's eyes.

"I don't want you to make a mistake of it," she said.

"No, mother. You'll have to be quite still, and then you'll get better soon."

But he was white to the lips, and their eyes as they looked at each other understood. Her eyes were so blue—such a wonderful forget-me-not blue! He felt if only they had been of a different colour he could have borne it better. His heart seemed to be ripping slowly in his breast. He knelt there, holding her hand, and neither said anything. Then Annie came in.

"Are you all right?" she murmured quickly to her mother.

"Of course," said Mrs. Ford.

Paul sat down and told her about Blackpool. She was curious.

A day or two after, he went to see Dr. Jamson in Nottingham, to arrange for a consultation. Paul had practically no money in the world. But he could borrow.

His mother had been used to go to the public consultation on Saturday morning, when she could see the doctor for only a nominal sum. Her son went on the same day. The waiting-room was full of poor women, who sat patiently on a bench around the wall. Paul thought of his mother, in her little black costume, sitting waiting likewise. The doctor was late. The women all looked rather frightened. Paul asked the women in attendance if he could see the doctor immediately he came. It was arranged so. The women sitting patiently round the walls of the room eyed the young man curiously.

At last the doctor came. He was about forty, good-looking, brown-skinned. His wife had died, and he, who had loved her, had specialised on women's ailments. Paul told his name and his mother's. The doctor did not remember.

"Number thirty-six B," said the name; and the doctor looked up the case in his book.

"There is a big lump that may be a tumour," said Paul. "But Dr. Ansell was going to write you a letter."

"Ah, yes!" replied the doctor, drawing the letter from his pocket. He was very friendly, affable, busy, kind. He would come to Sheffield the next day.

"What is your father?" he asked.

"He is a coal-miner," replied Paul.

"Not very well off, I suppose?"

"This—I see after this," said Paul.

"And you?" asked the doctor.

"I was a clerk in Jordan's Appliance Factory."

The doctor smiled at him.

"So—to go to Sheffield?" he said, putting the tips of his fingers together, and smiling with his eyes. "Eight guineas?"

"Thank you!" said Paul, flushing and stinging. "And you'll come to-morrow?"

"To-morrow—Sunday? Yes! Can you tell me about what time there is a train in the afternoon?"

"There is a Central one in at four-fifteen."

"And will there be any way of getting up to the house? Shall I have to walk?" The doctor smiled.

"There is the tram," said Paul; "the Western Park tram."

The doctor made a note of it.

"Thank you!" he said, and shook hands.

Then Paul went on home to see his father, who was left in the charge of Minnie. Walter Mossel was getting very grey now. Paul found him digging in the garden. He had written him a letter. He shook hands with his father.

"Hello, son! The hat looked, there!" said the father.

"Yes," replied the son. "But I'm going back tonight."

"Are you, begoy!" exclaimed the collier. "An' has our countess?"

"No."

"That's just like thee," said Mossel. "Come thy ways in."

The father was afraid of the mention of his wife. The two went indoors. Paul sat in silence; his father, with sandy hands, and sleeves rolled up, sat in the arm-chair opposite and looked at him.

"Well, an' how is that?" asked the mine at length, in a hoarse voice.

"She can sit up; she can be carried down for me," said Paul.

"That's a blain'!" exclaimed Mossel. "I hope we'll soon be bring' her home, then. An' what's that Nottingham doctor say?"

"He's going to-morrow to have an examination of her."

"Is he begoy! That's a tidy penny, I'm thinkin'!"

"Eight guineas."

"Eight guineas!" The mine spoke heartily. "Well, we may find it from somewhere."

"I can pay that," said Paul.

There was a silence between them for some time.

"She says she hopes you're getting on all right with Minnie," Paul said.

"Yes, I'm all right, an' I wish as she was," answered Mossel.

"But Minnie's a good little wench, Miss 'er heart!" He sat looking dismal.

"I'll have to be going at half-past three," said Paul.

"It's a tragedy for thee, lad! Eight guineas! An' where dost think she'll be able to get so far at this?"

"We must see what the doctors say to-morrow," Paul said.

Minnie sighed deeply. The house seemed strangely empty, and Paul thought his father looked lost, forlorn, and old.

"You'll have to go and see her next week, father," he said.

"I hope she'll be a-whom by that time," said Mervil.

"If she's not," said Paul, "then you must come."

"I dunno where I'll find th' money," said Mervil.

"And I'll write to you what the doctor says," said Paul.

"But this writes i' such a fashion, I cannot make it out," said Mervil.

"Well, I'll write plain."

It was no good asking Mervil to answer, for he could scarcely do more than write his own name.

The doctor came. Leonard felt it his duty to meet him with a cab. The consultation did not take long. Annie, Arthur, Paul, and Leonard were waiting in the parlour anxiously. The doctor came down. Paul glanced at them. He had never had any hope, except when he had deceived himself.

"It may be a tumour: we must wait and see," said Dr. Jamieson.

"And if it is," said Annie, "can you reveal it now?"

"Probably," said the doctor.

Paul put eight sovereigns and half a sovereign on the table. The doctor counted them, took a florin out of his purse, and put that down.

"Thank you!" he said. "I'm sorry Mrs. Mervil is so ill. But we must see what we can do."

"There can't be an operation?" said Paul.

The doctor shook his head.

"No," he said: "and even if there could, her heart wouldn't stand it."

"Is her heart sick?" asked Paul.

"Yes; you must be careful with her."

"Very sorry?"

"No—no, no! Just take care."

And the doctor went gone.

Then Paul carried his mother downstairs. She lay deeply, like a child. But when he was on the stairs, she put her arms round his neck, clinging.

"I'm so frightened of these heavy stairs," she said.

And he was frightened, too. He would let Leonard die in another drama. He felt he could not carry her.

"He thinks it's only a rascal!" cried Annie to her mother, "And he can send it away."

"I know he could," promised Mrs. Morel sadly.

She presented not so much that Paul had gone out of the room. He sat in the kitchen, smoking. Then he tried to brush some gray ash off his coat. He looked again. It was one of his mother's gray hairs. It was so long! He held it up, and it dripped into the chimney. He let go. The long gray hair floated and was gone to the blackness of the chimney.

The next day he kissed her before going back to work. It was very early in the morning, and they were alone.

"You won't flee, my boy?" she said.

"No mother."

"Now it would be silly. And take care of yourself!"

"Yes," he answered. Then, after a while: "And I shall come next Saturday, and shall bring my father!"

"I suppose he wants to come," she replied. "At any rate, if he does you'll have to let him."

He kissed her again, and stroked the hair from her temples, gently, tenderly, as if she were a lover.

"Shan't you be late?" she murmured.

"I'm going," he said, very low.

Still he sat a few minutes, stroking the brown and gray hair from her temples.

"And you won't be any worse, mother?"

"No, my son."

"You promise me?"

"Yes; I won't be any worse."

He kissed her, held her in his arms for a moment, and was gone. In the early sunny morning he ran to the station, crying all the way; he did not know what this. And her blue-eyes were wide and staring as she thought of him.

In the afternoon he went a walk with Clara. They sat in the Eddis wood where blackbells were standing. He told her later.

"You'll see," he said to Clara, "she'll never be better."

"Oh, you don't know!" replied the other.

"I do," he said.

She caught him impulsively to her breast.

"Try and forget it, dear," she said; "try and forget it!"

"I will," he answered.

Her breast was there, warm for him; her hands were in his hair. It was comforting, and he held his arms round her. But he

did not forget. He only talked to Clara of something else. And it was always so. When she felt it coming, the agony, she cried to him:

"Don't think of it, Paul! Don't think of it, my darling!"

And she pressed him to her breast, rocked him, soothed him like a child. So he put the trouble aside for her sake, to take it up again immediately he was alone. All the time, as he went about, he cried mechanically. His mind and hands were busy. He cried, he did not know why. It was his blood weeping. He was just as much alone whether he was with Clara or with the men in the White House. Just himself and this pressure inside him, that was all that existed. He read sometimes. He had to keep his mind occupied. And Clara was a way of occupying his mind.

On the Saturday Walter Morel went to Sheffield. He was a fashion figure, looking rather as if nobody owned him. Paul ran upstairs.

"My father's come," he said, kissing his mother.

"Has he?" she answered wearily.

The old collier came rather frightened into the bedroom.

"How does I find thee, lass?" he said, going forward and kissing her in a hasty, fussy fashion.

"Well, I'm middlin'," she replied.

"I see the art," he said. His mood looking down on her. Then he wiped his eyes with his handkerchiefed. Helpless, and as if nobody owned him, he looked.

"Have you gone on all right?" asked she with, rather wearily, as if it were an effort to talk to him.

"Yea," he answered. "Er's a bit behind-hand now and again, as yer might expect."

"Does she have your dinner ready?" asked Mrs. Morel.

"Well, I've 'ad to shoot at 'er once or twice," he said.

"And you must shoot at her if she's not ready. She will leave things to the last minute."

She gave him a few instructions. He sat looking at her as if she were almost a stranger to him, better when he was awkward and bashful, and she if he had lost his possession of mind, and wanted to run. This feeling that he wanted to run away, that he was on thorns to be gone from so trying a situation, and yet must linger because it looked better, made his presence so trying. He put up his eyebrows for misery, and clapped his fist on his knee, feeling so awkward in presence of a big trouble.

Mrs. Morel did not change much. She stayed in Sheffield for two months. If anything, at the end she was rather worse. But she wanted to go home. Annie had her children. Mrs. Morel

wanted to go home. So they got a motor-car from Nottingham—for she was too ill to go by train—and she was driven through the sunshine. It was just August; everything was bright and warm. Under the blue sky they could all see the sea doing. Yet she was jollier than she had been for weeks. They all laughed and talked.

"Auntie," she exclaimed, "I saw a lizard dart on that rock!"

Her eyes were so quick; she was still so full of life.

Mord knew she was coming. He had the front-door open. Everybody was on tiptoe. Half the street turned out. They heard the sound of the great motor-car. Mrs. Mord, smiling, drove home down the street.

"And just look at them all come out to see me!" she said. "But there, I suppose I should have done the same. How do you do, Mrs. Marchmont? How are you, Mrs. Hamilton?"

They none of them could hear, but they saw her smile and nod. And they all saw death on her face, they said. It was a great event in the street.

Mord wanted to carry her indoors, but he was too old. Arthur took her as if she were a child. They had set her a big, deep chair by the hearth where her rocking-chair used to stand. When she was unpacked and settled, and had drunk a little brandy, she looked round the room.

"Don't think I didn't like your house, Auntie," she said; "but it's nice to be in my own home again."

And Mord answered kindly:

"It is, dear, it is."

And Minnie, the little quiet maid, said:

"And we glad to 'ave you."

There was a lovely yellow row of sunflowers in the garden. He looked out of the window.

"Those are my sunflowers!" she said.

The Selects

"By the way," said Dr. Ansell one evening when Mord was in Sheffield, "we've got a man in the fever hospital here who comes from Nottingham—Dawson. He doesn't seem to have many belongings in this world."

"Dawson Dawson?" Paul exclaimed.

"That's the name—but been a fine fellow, physically. I should think. Born in a bit of a mess lately. You know him?"

"He used to work in the place where I am."

"Did he? Do you know anything about him? He's just talking, or he'd be a lot better than he is by now."

"I don't know anything of his home circumstances, except that he's separated from his wife and has been a bit down, I believe. But tell him about me, will you? Tell him I'll come and see him."

The next time Mord saw the doctor he said:

"And what about Dawson?"

"I told to him," answered the other, "'Do you know a man from Nottingham named Mord?' and he looked at me as if he'd jump at my throat. So I said, 'I see you know the name; it's Paul Mord.' Then I told him about your saying you would go and see him. 'What does he want?' he said, as if you were a policeman."

"And did he say he would see me?" asked Paul.

"He wouldn't say anything—good, bad, or indifferent," replied the doctor.

"Why not?"

"That's what I want to know. There he lies and talks, day in, day out. Can't get a word of information out of him."

"Do you think I might go?" asked Paul.

"You might."

There was a feeling of connection between the rival men, more than ever since they had fought. In a way Mord felt guilty towards the other, and more or less responsible. And being in such a state of soul himself, he felt an almost painful sympathy to Dawson, who was suffering and despairing, too. Besides, they had met in a naked extremity of hate, and it was a bond. At any rate, the elemental man in each had won.

He went down to the isolation hospital, with Dr. Ansell's card. The sister, a healthy young Irishwoman, led him down the ward.

"A welcome to see you, Jim Crow," she said.

Dawson turned over suddenly with a startled grunt.

"Eh?"

"Gaw!" she mocked. "He can only say 'Gaw!' I have brought you a gentleman to see you. Now say 'Thank you,' and show some manners."

Dawson looked aside with his dark, startled eyes beyond the sister at Paul. His look was full of fear, mistrust, hate, and misery. Mord met the swift, dark eyes, and hesitated. The two men were afraid of the naked stress they had been.

"Dr. Ansell told me you were here," said Mord, holding out his hand.

Dawson mechanically shook hands.

"So I thought I'd come in," continued Paul.

There was no answer. Dawson lay staring at the opposite wall.

"Say 'Gaw!'" mocked the nurse. "Say 'Gaw!' Jim Crow."

"He is gazing on all right!" said Paul to her.

"Oh yes! He lies and imagines he's going to die," said the nurse, "and it frightens every word out of his mouth."

"And you must have somebody to talk to," laughed Mord.

"That's it!" laughed the nurse. "Only two old men and a boy who always cries. It is hard here! Here am I dying to hear Jim Crow's voice, and nothing but an old 'Gaw!' will be given!"

"So rough on you!" said Mord.

"Isn't it?" said the nurse.

"I suppose I am a godsend," he laughed.

"Oh, dropped straight from heaven!" laughed the nurse.

Properly she left the two men alone. Dawson was thinner, and handsomer again, but life seemed low in him. As the doctor said, he was lying waiting, and would not move forward towards consciousness. He seemed to grasp every beat of his heart.

"Have you had a bad time?" asked Paul.

Suddenly again Dawson looked at him.

"What are you doing in Sheffield?" he asked.

"My mother was taken ill, so my sister's in Thornton Street. What are you doing here?"

There was no answer.

"How long have you been in?" Mord asked.

"I couldn't say for sure," Dawson answered grudgingly.

He lay staring across at the wall opposite, as if trying to believe Mord was not there. Paul felt his heart go hard and angry.

"Dr. Ansell told me you were here," he said coldly.

The other man did not answer.

"Typical! Is pretty bad, I know," Mordl persisted.

Suddenly Dawson said:

"What did you come for?"

"Because Dr. Ansell said you didn't know anybody here. Do you?"

"I know nobody nowhere," said Dawson.

"Well," said Paul, "it's because you don't choose to, then."

There was another silence.

"We'll be taking my mother home as soon as we can," said Paul.

"What's a matter with her?" asked Dawson, with a sick man's interest in illness.

"She's got a cancer,"

There was another silence.

"But we want to get her home," said Paul. "We'll have to get a motor-car."

Dawson lay thinking.

"Why don't you ask Thomas Jordan to lend you his?" said Dawson.

"It's not big enough," Mordl answered.

Dawson blinked his dark eyes as he lay thinking.

"Then ask Jack Filkins; he'd lend it you. You know him."

"I think I'll hire one," said Paul.

"You're a fool if you do," said Dawson.

The sick man was gaunt and hunched again. Paul was sorry for him because his eyes looked so tired.

"Did you get a job here?" he asked.

"I was only here a day or two before I was taken bad," Dawson replied.

"You want to get in a convalescent home," said Paul.

The other's face clouded again.

"I'm goin' in no convalescent home," he said.

"My father's house is the one at Southorpe, an' he'll let it. Dr. Ansell would get you a recommend."

Dawson lay thinking. It was evident he dared not face the world again.

"The seaside would be all right just now," Mordl said. "Sun on those sandhills, and the waves not far out."

The other did not answer.

"By Gad!" Paul concluded, not minceable to bother much: "it's all right when you know you're going to walk again, and relax!"

Dawson glanced at him quickly. The man's dark eyes were afraid

to meet any other eyes in the world. But the real misery and helplessness in Paul's case gave him a feeling of relief.

"Is she far gone?" he asked.

"She's going like war," Paul answered; "but cheerful—lively!"

He hit his lip. After a minute he rose.

"Well, I'll be going," he said. "I'll leave you this half-crown."

"I don't want it," Dawes muttered.

Mabel did not answer, but left the coin on the table.

"Well," he said, "I'll try and run in when I've back in Sheffield.

Happen you might like to see my brother-in-law? He works in Pevern's."

"I don't know him," said Dawes.

"He's all right. Should I tell him to come? He might bring you some papers to look at."

The other man did not answer. Paul went. The strong emotion that Dawes aroused in him, repressed, made him shiver.

He did not tell his mother, but next day he spoke to Clara about this interview. It was in the dinner-hour. The two did not often go out together now, but this day he asked her to go with him to the Garden grounds. There they sat while the wicker gazebos and the yellow calceolarias blazed in the sunlight. She was now always rather protective, and rather resentful towards him.

"Did you know Baxter was in Sheffield Hospital with typhoid?" he asked.

She looked at him with rounded gray eyes, and her face went pale.

"No," she said, frightened.

"He's getting better. I went to see him yesterday—the doctor told me."

Clara seemed stricken by the news.

"Is he very bad?" she asked guiltily.

"He has been. He's mending now."

"What did he say to you?"

"Oh, nothing! He seems to be sulking."

There was a distance between the two of them. He gave her more information.

She went about shut up and silent. The next time they took a walk together, she disengaged herself from his arm, and walked at a distance from him. He was wanting her mother badly.

"What's you be nice with me?" he asked.

She did not answer.

"What's the matter?" he said, putting his arm across her shoulder.

"Don't!" she said, disengaging herself.

He left her alone, and returned to his own brooding.

"Is it Baxter that upsets you?" he asked at length.

"I have been sick to him!" she said.

"I've said many a time you haven't treated him well," he replied.

And there was a hostility between them. Each pursued his own train of thought.

"I've treated him—no, I've treated him badly," she said.

"And now you treat me badly. It serves me right."

"How do I treat you badly?" he said.

"It serves me right," she repeated. "I never considered him worth having, and now you don't consider me. But it serves me right. He loved me a thousand times better than you ever did."

"He didn't!" protested Paul.

"He did!" At any rate, he did respect me, and that's what you don't do."

"It looked as if he respected you!" he said.

"He did! And I made him horrid—I know I did! You've taught me that. And he loved me a thousand times better than ever you do."

"All right," said Paul.

He only wanted to be left alone now. He had his own trouble, which was almost too much to bear. Clara only comforted him and made him tired. He was not sorry when he left her.

She went on the first opportunity to Sheffield to see her husband. The morning was not a success. But she left him roused and fresh and sunny. She wanted to make resolutions. It was not that she loved him. As she looked at him lying there his heart did not warm with love. Only she wanted to haughty herself to him, to lord herself him. She wanted now to be self-sacrificial. After all, she had failed to make Mord really love her. She was greatly frightened. She wanted to do penance. So she knelt to Dawn, and it gave him a subtle pleasure. But the distance between them was still very great—too great. It frightened the man. It almost pleased the woman. She liked to feel she was serving him across an insuperable distance. She was proud now.

Mord went to see Dawn more or less. There was a sort of friendship between the two men, who were all the while deadly rivals. But they never mentioned the woman who was between them.

Mrs. Mord got gradually worse. At first they used to carry her downstairs, sometimes even into the garden. She sat propped in her chair, smiling, and so pretty. The gold wedding-ring shone on her white hand; her hair was carefully brushed. And she

waited the tangled sunflowers dying, the chrysanthemums scolding wet, and the daisies.

Paul and she were afraid of each other. He knew, and she knew, that she was dying. But they kept up a pretence of cheerfulness. Every morning, when he got up, he went into her room in his pajamas.

"Did you sleep, my dear?" he asked.

"Yes," she answered.

"Not very well?"

"Well, yes!"

Then he knew she had lain awake. He stooped down under the bedclothes, pursuing the place on her side where the pain was.

"Has it been bad?" he asked.

"No. It hurt a bit, but nothing to mention."

And she smiled in her old nervous way. As she lay she looked like a girl. And all the while her blue eyes watched him. But there were the dark pain-circles beneath that made him ache again.

"It's a sunny day," he said.

"It's a beautiful day."

"Do you think you'll be carried down?"

"I shall see."

Then he went away to get her breakfast. All day long he was conscious of nothing but her. It was a long ache that made him foolish. Then, when he got home in the early evening, he glanced through the kitchen window. She was not there; she had not got up.

He ran straight upstairs and kissed her. He was almost afraid to ask:

"Didn't you get up, Pigeon?"

"No," she said. "It was that morphine; it made me tired."

"I think he gives you too much," he said.

"I think he does," she answered.

He sat down by the bed, miserably. She had a way of curling and lying on her side, like a child. The grey and brown hair was loose over her ear.

"Doesn't it tickle you?" he said, gently putting it back.

"It does," she replied.

His face was near hers. Her blue eyes looked straight into his, like a girl's—warm, laughing with tender love. It made him pant with nerves, agony, and love.

"You want your hair doing in a plait," he said. "Lie still."

And going behind her, he carefully loosened her hair, brushed it out. It was like fine long silk of brown and grey. Her head was cradled between her shoulders. As he lightly brushed and plaited

her hair, he bit his lip and felt chilled. It all seemed unreal, he could not understand it.

At night he often worked in her room, looking up from time to time. And so often he found her blue eyes fixed on him. And when their eyes met, she smiled. He worked away again mechanically, producing good stuff without knowing what he was doing.

Sometimes he came in, very pale and still, with wonderful, sudden eyes, like a man who is drunk almost to death. They were both afraid of the web that was ripping between them.

Then she pretended to be better, charmed to him guilty, made a great fuss over some scraps of news. For they had both come to the realization when they had to make much of the trifles, but they should give in to the big thing, and their human independence would go smooth. They were afraid, so they made light of things and were gay.

Sometimes as she lay he knew she was thinking of the pain. Her mouth gradually shut hard in a line. She was holding herself rigid, so that she might die without ever entering the great cry that was tearing from her. He never forgot that hard, wordy lonely and stubborn clenching of her mouth, which persisted for weeks. Sometimes, when it was lighter, she talked about her husband. Now she hated him. She did not forgive him. She could not bear him to be in the room. And a few things, the things that had been worst bitter to her, came up again so strongly that they broke from her, and she told her son.

He felt as if his life were being destroyed, piece by piece, within him. Often the tears came suddenly. He ran to the window, the tear-drops falling on the pavement. Often he could not go on with his work. The pen stopped writing. He sat staring, quite unconscious. And when he came round again he felt sick, and trembled in his limbs. He never questioned what it was. His mind did not try to analyze or understand. He merely submitted, and kept his eyes shut; let the thing go over him.

His mother did the same. She thought of the pain, of the morphia, of the next day; hardly ever of the death. That was coming, she knew. She had to submit to it. But she would never submit it or make friends with it. Blind, with her face that hard and killed, she was pushed towards the door. The days passed, the weeks, the months.

Sometimes, in the sunny afternoons, she seemed almost happy.

"I try to think of the nice times—when we went to Haddonthorpe, and Robin Hood's Bay, and Skarshill," she said. "After all, not everybody has seen these beautiful places. And wasn't it beautiful to try to think of that, not of the other things."

Then, again, for a whole evening the spoke not a word; neither did he. They were together, rigid, motionless, silent. He went late into his room at last to go to bed, and leaned against the doorway as if paralyzed, unable to go any further. His consciousness went. A furious storm, he knew not what, seemed to sweep inside him. He stood leaning there, trembling, never questioning.

In the morning they were both covered again, though her face was gray with the morphia, and her body felt like ash. But they were bright again, nevertheless. Often, especially if Anne or Arthur were at home, he neglected her. He did not see much of Clara. Usually he was with men. He was quick and active and lively; but when his friends saw him go white to the lips, his dark eyes glittering, they had a certain misgiving of him. Sometimes he went to Clara, but she was almost cold to him.

"Take care!" he said simply.

Occasionally she would. But she was afraid. When he had her then, there was something in it that made her shrink away from him—something unnatural. She grew to dread him. He was so quiet, yet so strange. She was afraid of the man who was not there with her, whom she could feel behind this mask-like lover; somebody sinister, that filled her with horror. She began to have a kind of horror of him. It was almost as if he were a criminal. He wanted her—he had her—and it made her feel as if clutch itself fast in its grip. She lay in heaven. There was no man there loving her. She almost hated him. Then came little bouts of tenderness. But she dared not pity him.

Dawson had come to Colonel Scott's Home near Nottingham. There Paul visited him sometimes, Clara very occasionally. Between the two men the friendship had developed peculiarly. Dawson, who seemed very slow and seemed very feeble, seemed to leave himself in the hands of Paul.

In the beginning of November Clara concluded Paul that it was her birthday.

"I'd nearly forgotten," he said.

"I thought quite," she replied.

"No. Shall we go to the theatre for the week-end?"

They went. It was cold and rather dismal. She waited for him to be warm and tender with her, instead of which he seemed hardly aware of her. He sat in the railway-carriage, looking out, and was startled when she spoke to him. He was not definitely thinking. Things seemed as if they did not exist. She went across to him.

"What is it, dear?" she asked.

"Nothing!" he said. "Don't those windmill sails look monstrous?"

He was holding her hand. He could not talk nor think. It was a confusion, however, to be holding her hand. She was disappointed and miserable. He was not with her; she was nothing.

And in the evening they sat among the sandhills, looking at the black, heavy sea.

"She will never give in," he said quietly.

(Clara's heart sank.)

"No," she replied.

"There are different ways of dying. My father's people are frightened, and have to be handed out of life into death like cattle into a slaughter-house, pulled by the neck; but my mother's people are pushed from behind, inch by inch. They are stubborn people, and won't die."

"You," said Clara.

"And she won't die. She can't. Mr. Reshaw, the parson, was in the other day. 'Think!' he said to her; 'you will leave your mother and father, and your sisters, and your son, in the Other Land.' And she said: 'I have done without them for a long time, and can do without them now. It is the living I want, not the dead.' She wants to live even now."

"Oh, how horrible!" said Clara, not frightened to speak.

"And she looks at me, and she wants to stay with me," he went on passionately. "She's got such a will, it seems as if she would never go—never!"

"Don't think of it!" cried Clara.

"And she was religious—she is religious now—but it is no good. She simply won't give in. And do you know, I said to her on Thursday, 'Mother, if I had to die, I'd die. I'd want to die.' And she said to me, sharp: 'Do you think I haven't? Do you think you can die when you like?'"

His voice ceased. He did not cry, only went on speaking monotonously. Clara wanted to run. She looked round. There was the black, re-schaling shore, the dark sky down on her. She got up restlessly. She wanted to be where there was light, where there were other people. She wanted to be away from him. He sat with his head dropped, not moving a muscle.

"And I don't want her to see," he said, "and she knows it. When I ask her, 'Shall you have anything?' she's almost afraid to say 'Yes.' 'I'd have a cup of sugar's,' she says. 'I'd only keep your strength up.' I said to her, 'Yes'—and she almost cried—but there's such a goading when I see nothing, I can't bear it. So I went and made her the food. It's the cancer that gnaws like that at her. I wish she'd die!"

"Come!" said Clara roughly. "I'm going."

He followed her down the darkness of the stairs. He did not come to her. He seemed scarcely aware of her existence. And she was afraid of him, and chilled him.

In the same room where they went back to Nottingham. He was always busy, always doing something, always going from one to the other of his friends.

On the Monday he went to see Baxter Dawson. Licker and pale, the man rose to greet the other, clinging to his chair as he held out his hand.

"You shouldn't get up," said Paul.

Dawson sat down heavily, staring blind with a sort of suspicion.

"Don't you waste your time on me," he said, "if you've come here to do."

"I wanted to come," said Paul. "Herd! I bought you some meat."

The invalid put them aside.

"It's not been much of a week-end," said Mord.

"How's your mother?" asked the other.

"Hardly any different."

"I thought she was perhaps worse, being as you didn't come on Sunday."

"I was at Skogreen," said Paul. "I wanted a change."

The other looked at him with dark eyes. He seemed to be waiting, not quite daring to ask, starting to be told.

"I went with Clara," said Paul.

"I know as much," said Dawson quietly.

"It was an old promise," said Paul.

"You have it your own way," said Dawson.

This was the first time Clara had been definitely mentioned between them.

"Nay," said Mord slowly; "she's died of me."

Again Dawson looked at him.

"Since August she's been getting died of me," Mord repeated.

The two men were very quiet together. Paul suggested a game of draughts. They played in silence.

"I'll go ahead when my mother's dead," said Paul.

"Ahead!" repeated Dawson.

"Yes; I don't care what I do."

They continued the game. Dawson was winning.

"I'll have to begin a new pair of some sort," said Paul; "and you as well, I suppose."

He took one of Dawson's pieces.

"I choose where," said the other.

"Things have to happen," Mord said. "It's no good doing anything—at least—no, I don't know. Give me some coffee."

The two men sat silent, and began another game of draughts.

"What made that scar on your mouth?" asked Daven.

Paul put his hand heavily to his lips, and looked over the garden.

"I had a bicycle accident," he said.

Daven's hand trembled as he moved the piece.

"You shouldn't let her laugh at me," he said very low.

"What?"

"That night on Woodborough Road, when you and her passed me—you with your hand on her shoulder."

"I never laughed at you," said Paul.

Daven kept his fingers on the draughts-piece.

"I never knew you were there till the very second when you passed," said Mord.

"It was that as did me," he said, very low.

Paul took another piece.

"I never laughed," he said, "except as I'm always laughing."

They finished the game.

That night Mord walked home from Nottingham, in order to have something to do. The lanterns flared in a red blorch over Enderby; the black clouds were like a low ceiling. As he went along the ten miles of highroad, he felt as if he were walking out of life, between the black levels of the sky and the earth. But at the end was only the sick-room. If he walked and walked far over, there was only that place to come to.

He was not tired when he got home, or he did not know it. Across the field he could see the red firelight leaping in her bed-room window.

"When she's dead," he said to himself, "that fire will go out."

He took off his boots quietly and went upstairs. His mother's door was wide open, because she slept alone still. The red firelight dashed its glow on the landing. Soft as a shadow, he peeped in her doorway.

"Paul!" she murmured.

His heart seemed to break again. He went in and sat by the bed.

"How late you are!" she murmured.

"Not very," he said.

"Why, what time is it?" The murmur came plaintive and helpless.

"It's only just gone eleven."

That was not true; it was nearly one o'clock.

"Oh!" she said; "I thought it was later!"

And he knew the unbearable misery of her rights that would not go.

"Can't you sleep, my pigeon?" he said.

"No, I can't," she wept.

"Never mind, Little!" he said crooning. "Never mind, my love. I'll stop with you half an hour, my pigeon; then perhaps it will be better."

And he sat by the bedside, slowly, rhythmically stroking her brow with his finger-tips, stroking her eyes shut, soothing her, holding her fingers in his free hand. They could hear the sleepers' breathing in the other rooms.

"Now go to bed," she murmured, lying quiet still under his fingers and his love.

"Will you sleep?" he asked.

"Yes, I think so."

"You feel better, my little, don't you?"

"Yes," she said, like a frail, half-washed child.

Still the days and the weeks went by. He hardly ever went to see Clara now. But he wandered restlessly from one person to another for some help, and there was none anywhere. Miriam had written to him tenderly. He went to see her. Her heart was very sore when she saw him, white, gaunt, with his eyes dark and bewildered. Her pity came up, hurting her till she could not bear it.

"How is she?" she asked.

"The same—the same!" he said. "The doctor says she can't last, but I know she will. She'll be here at Christmas."

Miriam shuddered. She drew him to her; she pressed him to her bosom; she kissed him and kissed him. He subsided, but it was torture. She could not kiss his agony. That remained alone and apart. She kissed his face, and soothed his blood, while his soul was apart writhing with the agony of death. And she kissed him and fingered his body, till at last, feeling he would go mad, he got away from her. It was not that he wanted just that—not that. And she thought she had soothed him and soothed him good.

December came, and some snow. He stayed at home all the while now. They could not afford a nurse. Annie came to look after her mother; the parish came, when they loved, came in morning and evening. Paul shared the nursing with Annie. Often, in the evenings, when friends were in the kitchen with them, they all laughed together and shook with laughter. It was reaction. Paul was so cruel, Annie was so gentle. The whole party laughed till they cried, trying to imitate the sound. And Mrs. Most, lying alone in the darkness heard them, and among her bitterness was a feeling of relief.

Paul went up with the hot milk in a feeding-cup. It was nine o'clock.

She was curled up in bed, and he put the feeding-cup between her lips that he would have died to save from any hurt. She took a sip, then put the spout of the cup away and looked at him with her dark, wondering eyes. He looked at her.

"Oh, it is bitter, Paul!" she said, making a little grimace.

"It's a new sleeping draught the doctor gives me for you," he said. "He thought it wouldn't leave you in such a state in the morning."

"And I hope it won't," she said, like a child.

She drank some more of the milk.

"But it is horrid!" she said.

He saw her find fingers over the cup, her lips making a little more.

"I know—I turned it," he said. "But I'll give you some clean milk afterwards."

"I think so," she said, and she went on with the draught. She was obedient to him like a child. He wondered if she knew. He saw her poor wasted throat moving as she drank with difficulty. Then he ran downstairs for more milk. There were no grains in the bottom of the cup.

"Has she had it?" whispered Annie.

"Yes—and she said it was bitter."

"Oh!" laughed Annie, putting her under lip between her teeth.

"And I told her it was a new draught. Where's that milk?"

They both went upstairs.

"I wonder why nurse didn't come to settle me down?" Anne placed the mother, like a child, weakly.

"She said she was going to a concert, my love," replied Annie.

"Did she?"

They were alone a minute. Mrs. Morel gulped the little clean milk.

"Annie, that draught was horrid!" she said plaintively.

"Was it, my love? Well, never mind."

The mother sighed again with weariness. Her pulse was very irregular.

"Let us settle you down," said Annie. "Perhaps nurse will be in late."

"Ay," said the mother—"ay."

They turned the clothes back. Paul saw his mother like a girl curled up in her flannel nightgown. Quickly they made one half the bed, moved her, made the other, straightened her nightgown over her small feet, and covered her up.

"There," said Paul, stroking her softly. "There!—now you'll sleep."

"Yes," she said. "I didn't think you could do the bed so nicely," she added, almost gaily. Then she curled up, with her cheek on her hand, her head sagged between her shoulder. Paul put the long thin plait of gray hair over her shoulder and kissed her.

"You'll sleep, my love," he said.

"Yes," she answered trustfully. "Good-night."

They put out the light, and it was still.

Morn was in bed. Morn did not come. Annie and Paul came to look at her at about eleven. She seemed to be sleeping as usual after her draught. Her mouth had come a bit open.

"Shall we sit up?" said Paul.

"I'll lie with her as I always do," said Annie. "She might wake up."

"All right. And call me if you see any difference."

"Yes."

They lingered before the bedroom fire, feeling the night big and black and noisy outside, their two selves alone in the world. At last he went into the next room and went to bed.

He slept almost immediately, but kept waking every now and again. Then he went sound asleep. He started awake at Annie's whispered, "Paul, Paul!" He saw his sister in her white night-dress, with her long plait of hair down her back, standing in the darkness.

"Yes?" he whispered, rising up.

"Come and look at her."

He slipped out of bed. A head of gas was burning in the sick chamber. His mother lay with her cheek on her hand, curled up as she had gone to sleep. But her mouth had fallen open, and she breathed with great, hoarse breaths, like snoring, and there were long intervals between.

"She's going!" he whispered.

"Yes," said Annie.

"How long has she been like that?"

"I only just woke up."

Annie huddled into the dressing-gown, Paul wrapped himself in a brown blanket. It was three o'clock. He extended the fire. Then the two sat waiting. The great, snoring breath was taken—held awhile—then given back. There was a space—a long space. Then they started. The great, snoring breath was taken again. He bent close down and looked at her.

"Isn't it awful?" whispered Annie.

He nodded. They sat down again helplessly. Again came the great, roaring breath. Again they hung suspended. Again it was given back, long and harsh. The storm, so irregular, at such wide intervals, sounded through the house. Morel, in his room, slept on. Paul and Anne sat crouched, huddled, motionless. The great, roaring sound began again—there was a painful pause while the breath was held—back came the roaring breath. Minutes after minutes passed. Paul looked at her again, breathing low over her.

"She may last like this," he said.

They were both silent. He looked out of the window, and could faintly discern the snow on the garden.

"You may go to my bed," he said to Anne. "I'll sit up."

"No," she said, "I'll stop with you."

"I'd rather you didn't," he said.

At last Anne crept out of the room, and he was alone. He hugged himself in his brown blanket, crouched in front of his mother, watching. She looked dreadful, with the bottom jaw fallen back. He watched. Sometimes he thought the great breath would never begin again. He could not bear it—the waiting. Then suddenly, startling him, came the great harsh sound. He moved the fire again, colorlessly. She must not be disturbed. The minutes went by. The night was going, breath by breath. Each time the sound came he felt it wring him, till at last he could not feel so much.

His father got up. Paul heard the rainier clanking his smoking on, starting. Then Morel, in shirt and stockings, entered.

"Hush!" said Paul.

Morel stood watching. Then he looked at his son, helplessly, and in horror.

"Had I better stop a-while?" he whispered.

"No. Go to work. She'll last through to-morrow."

"I don't think so."

"Yes. Go to work."

The rainier looked at her again, in fear, and went obediently out of the room. Paul saw the tape of his garters swinging against his legs.

After another half-hour Paul went downstairs and drank a cup of tea, then returned. Morel, dressed for the pit, came upstairs again.

"Am I to go?" he said.

"Yes."

And in a few minutes Paul heard his father's heavy footsteps go cludding over the descending snow. Morel called in the street as they tramped in gangs to work. The terrible long-drawn

beasts coughed—howe—howe—howe; then a long pause—
 then ah—ah-b-b-b-b! as it came back. The snow over the snow
 sounded the hoarseness of the ironworks. One after another they
 coughed and howled, some small and far away, some near, the
 blowers of the collieries and the other works. Then there was
 silence. He needed the fire. The great beasts broke the silence—
 she looked just the same. He put back the blind and peered out.
 Still it was dark. Perhaps there was a lighter tinge. Perhaps the
 snow was bluish. He drew up the blind and got dressed. Then,
 quivering, he drank brandy from the bottle on the washstand.
 The snow was growing blue. He heard a cart clanking down the
 street. Yes, it was seven o'clock, and it was coming a little bit
 light. He heard some people calling. The world was waking. A
 grey, deathly dawn crept over the snow. Yes, he could see the
 houses. He put out the gas. It seemed very dark. The breathing
 came still, but he was always used to it. He could see her. She
 was just the same. He wondered if he piled heavy clothes on top
 of her it would make it harder and the horrible breathing would
 stop. He looked at her. That was not her—not her a bit. If he
 pulled the blanket and heavy coats on her—

Suddenly the door opened, and Annie entered. She looked at
 him questioningly.

"Just the same," he said calmly.

They whispered together a minute, then went downstairs to get
 breakfast. It was twenty to eight. Soon Annie came down.

"Isn't it awful! Doesn't she look awful!" she whispered, dazed
 with horror.

He nodded.

"If she looks like that!" said Annie.

"Drink some tea," he said.

They went upstairs again. Soon the neighbouress came with their
 frightened question:

"How is she?"

It went on just the same. She lay with her cheek in her hand,
 her mouth fallen open, and the great, ghastly moans came and
 went.

At ten o'clock nurse came. She looked strange and very-begone.

"Nurse," cried Paul, "she'll live like this for days?"

"She can't, Mr. Moor," said nurse. "She can't."

There was a silence.

"Isn't it dreadful!" wailed the nurse. "Who would have
 thought she could stand it? Go down now, Mr. Moor, go down."

At last, at about eleven o'clock, he went downstairs and sat in
 the neighbour's house. Annie was downstairs also. Nurse and

Annie were upstairs. Paul sat with his head in his hands. Suddenly Annie came flying across the yard crying, half mad:

"Paul—Paul—she's gone!"

In a second he was back in his own house and upstairs. She lay curled up and still, with her face on her hand, and water was wiping her mouth. They all stood back. He knelt down, and put his face to hers and his arms round her:

"My love—my love—oh, my love!" he whispered again and again. "My love—oh, my love!"

Then he heard the voice behind him, crying, crying:

"She's better, Mr. Morel, she's better."

When he took his face up from his work, dead mother he went straight downstairs and began blacking his boots.

There was a good deal to do, letters to write, and so on. The doctor came and glanced at her, and sighed.

"Ah—poor thing!" he said, then turned away. "Well, call at the surgery about six for the certificate."

The ladies were home long work at about four o'clock. He dragged himself into the house and sat down. Minnie hurried to give him his dinner. Tired, he laid his black coat on the table. There were twelve turnips for his dinner, which he liked. Paul wondered if he knew. It was some time, and nobody had spoken. At last the son said:

"You noticed the blinds were down?"

Minnie looked up.

"No," he said. "Why—has she gone?"

"Yes."

"When was that?"

"About twelve this morning."

"How?"

The father sat still for a moment, then began his dinner. It was as if nothing had happened. He ate his turnips in silence. Afterwards he washed and went upstairs to dress. The door of her room was shut.

"Have you seen her?" Annie asked of him when he came down.

"No," he said.

In a little while he went out. Annie went away, and Paul called on the undertaker, the chryseum, the doctor, the registrar. It was a long business. He got back at nearly eight o'clock. The undertaker was coming soon to measure for the coffin. The house was empty except for him. He took a candle and went upstairs.

The room was cold, that had been warm for so long. Flowers, bottles, plates, all sick-room litter was taken away; everything was hard and eastern. She lay naked on the bed, the sweep of the

shoot from the raised feet was like a clean curve of moon, so silent. She lay like a maiden asleep. With his candle in his hand, he bent over her. She lay like a girl asleep and dreaming of her love. The mouth was a little open, as if wondering from the suffering, but her face was young. Her brow clear and white as if life had never touched it. He looked again at the eyebrows, at the small, winsome nose a bit on one side. She was young again. Only the hair as it curled so beautifully from her temples was mixed with silver, and the two simple plaits that lay on her shoulders were filigree of silver and brown. She would wake up. She would lift her eyelids. She was with him still. He bent and kissed her passionately. But there was coldness against his mouth. He bit his lip with horror. Looking at her, he felt he could never, never let her go. But He stroked the hair from her temples. That, too, was cold. He saw the mouth so dumb and wondering at the heat. Then he reached on the floor, whispering to her:

"Mother, mother!"

He was still with her when the undertakers came, young men who had been to school with him. They touched her reverently, and in a quiet, businesslike fashion. They did not look at her. He watched jealously. He and Annie guarded her fiercely. They would not let anybody come to see her, and the neighbours were offended.

After a while Paul went out of the house, and played cards at a friend's. It was midnight when he got back. His father rose from the couch as he entered, saying in a plaintive way:

"I thought the wee silver combs, lad."

"I didn't think you'd sit up," said Paul.

His father looked so forlorn. Morel had been a man without fear—simply nothing frightened him. Paul realized with a start that he had been afraid to go to bed, alone in the house with his dead. He was sorry.

"I forgot you'd be alone, father," he said.

"Don't want overt to eat?" asked Morel.

"No."

"Sitheon—I made thee a deep o' hot rolls. Get it down thee; it's cold enough for overt."

Paul drank it.

"I must go to Nottingham to-morrow," he said.

After a while Morel went to bed. He hurried past the closed door, and left his own door open. Soon the sun came upstairs also. He went in to his her goodnight, as usual. It was cold and dark. He wished they had kept her fire burning. Still she dreamed her young dream. But she would be cold.

"My dear!" he whispored. "My dear!"

And he did not kiss her, for fear she should be cold and strange to him. It eased him she slept so beautifully. He shut her door softly, not to wake her, and went to bed.

In the morning Morel summoned his courage, leaving Annie downstairs and Paul coughing in the roomy across the landing. He opened her door, and went into the darkened room. He saw the white upturned forms in the twilight, but her he dared not see. Bewildered, too frightened to possess any of his faculties, he got out of the room again and left her. He never looked at her again. He had not seen her for months, because he had not dared to look. And she looked like his young wife again.

"Have you seen her?" Annie asked of him sharply after breakfast.

"Yes," he said.

"And don't you think she looks nice?"

"Yes."

He went out of the house soon after. And all the time he seemed to be creeping aside to avoid it.

Paul went about from place to place, doing the business of the death. He met Clara in Nottingham, and they had tea together in a cafe, when they were quite jolly again. She was infinitely refused to find he did not take it tragically.

Later, when the relatives began to come for the funeral, the affair became public, and the children became social beings. They put themselves aside. They buried her in a furious storm of rain and wind. The wet clay glistened, all the white flowers were soaked. Annie gripped his arm and leaned forward. Down below she saw a dark corner of William's coffin. The oak box sank readily. She was gone. The rain poured in the grave. The procession of black, with its umbrellas glistening, turned away. The cemetery was deserted under the drenching cold rain.

Paul went home and busied himself supplying the guests with drinks. His father sat in the kitchen with him. Morel's relatives, "superior" people, and wept, and said what a good loss she'd been, and how he'd tried to do everything he could for her—everything. He had written all his life to do what he could for her, and he'd nothing to reproach himself with. She was gone, but he'd done his best for her. He wiped his eyes with his white handkerchief. He'd nothing to reproach himself for, he repeated. All his life he'd done his best for her.

And that was how he tried to comfort her. His never thoughts of her personally. Everything deep in him he denied. Paul hated his father for sitting sentimentalizing over her. He knew he would

do it in the public-house. For the real tragedy went on in Mabel in spite of himself! Sometimes, later, he came down from his afternoon sleep, white and moaning.

"I have been dreaming of thy mother," he said in a small voice.

"Have you father? When I dream of her it's always just as she was when she was well. I dream of her alive, but it seems quite nice and natural, as if nothing had altered."

But Mabel coughed in front of the fire in terror.

The weeks passed half real, not much pain, not much of anything, perhaps a little relief, mostly a *mal de vivre*. Paul went restlessly from place to place. For some months, since his mother had been worse, he had not made love to Clara. She was, as it were, dumb to him, rather distant. Dawson saw her very occasionally, but the two could not get an inch across the great distance between them. The faces of them were drifting forward.

Dawson recovered very slowly. He was in the consultant's home at Hingston at Christmas, nearly well again. Paul went to the seaside for a few days. His father was with Annie in Sheffield. Dawson came to Paul's lodgings. His time in the house was up. The two men, between whom was such a big reserve, seemed friendly to each other. Dawson depended on Mabel now. He knew Paul and Clara had practically separated.

Two days after Christmas Paul was to go back to Nottingham. The evening before he sat with Dawson smoking before the fire.

"You know Clara's coming down for the day to-morrow?" he said.

The other man glanced at him.

"Yes, you told me," he replied.

Paul drank the remainder of his glass of whisky.

"I told the landlady your wife was coming," he said.

"Did you?" said Dawson, drinking, but almost leaving himself in the other's hands. He got up rather stiffly, and reached for Mabel's glass.

"Let me fill you up," he said.

Paul jumped up.

"You sit still," he said.

But Dawson, with rather shaky hand, continued to mix the drink.

"Say when," he said.

"Thanks!" replied the other. "But you've no business to get up."

"It does me good, lad," replied Dawson. "I begin to think I'm right again, then."

"You are about right, you know."

"I am, certainly I am," said Dawson, nodding to him.

"And Len says he can get you on in Sheffield."

Dawson glanced at him again, with dark eyes that agreed with everything the other would say, perhaps a trifle dominated by him.

"It's luxury," said Paul, "starting again. I feel in a lot bigger mood than you."

"In what way, lad?"

"I don't know. I don't know, it's as if I was in a tangled sort of hole, rather dark and dreary, and no road anywhere."

"I know—I understand it," Dawson, said, nothing. "But you'll find it'll come all right."

He spoke earnestly.

"I suppose so," said Paul.

Dawson knocked his pipe in a hopeless fashion.

"You've not done for yourself like I have," he said.

Mabel saw the white and the white hand of the other man gripping the stem of the pipe and knocking out the ash, as if he had given up.

"How old are you?" Paul asked.

"Thirty-nine," replied Dawson, glancing at him.

Those brown eyes, full of the consciousness of failure, almost pleading for reassurance, for someone to re-establish the man in himself, to warm him, to set him up firm again, troubled Paul.

"You'll just be in your prime," said Mabel. "You don't look as if much life had gone out of you."

The brown eyes of the other flashed suddenly.

"It hasn't," he said. "The go is there."

Paul looked up and laughed.

"We've both got plenty of life in us yet to make things fly," he said.

The eyes of the two men met. They exchanged one look. Having recognised the stress of passion each in the other, they both drank their whisky.

"Yes, indeed!" said Dawson, breathless.

There was a pause.

"And I don't see," said Paul, "why you shouldn't go on where you left off."

"What——?" said Dawson, suggestively.

"You—fit your old home together again."

Dawson hid his face and shook his head.

"Couldn't be done," he said, and he looked up with an ironic smile.

"Why? Because you don't want?"

"Perhaps."

They smoked in silence. Dawson showed his teeth as he bit his pipe stem.

"You mean you don't want her?" asked Paul.

Dawson stared up at the picture with a comic expression on his face.

"I hardly know," he said.

The smoke flooded softly up.

"I believe she wants you," said Paul.

"Do you?" replied the other, soft, satirical, abstract.

"Yes. She never really liked me to me—you were always there in the background. That's why she wouldn't get a divorce."

Dawson continued to stare in a satirical fashion at the picture over the mantelpiece.

"That's how women are with me," said Paul. "They want me like mad, but they don't want to belong to me. And she belonged to you all the time. I know."

The triumphant smile came up in Dawson. He showed his teeth more definitely.

"Perhaps I was a fool," he said.

"You were a big fool," said Morel.

"But perhaps even then you were a bigger fool," said Dawson. There was a touch of triumph and malice in it.

"Do you think so?" said Paul.

They were silent for some time.

"At any rate, I'm clearing out to-morrow," said Morel.

"I see," answered Dawson.

Then they did not talk any more. The instinct to murder each other had returned. They almost avoided each other.

They shared the same bedroom. When they retired Dawson seemed abstract, thinking of something. He sat on the side of the bed in his shirt, looking at his legs.

"Aren't you getting cold?" asked Morel.

"I was lookin' at those legs," replied the other.

"What's up with 'em? They look all right," replied Paul, from his bed.

"They look all right. But there's some water in 'em yet."

"And what about it?"

"Come and look."

Paul reluctantly got out of bed and went to look at the rather handsome legs of the other man, that were covered with glistening, dark gold hair.

"Look here," said Dawson, pointing to his shin. "Look at the water under here."

"Well?" said Paul.

The man pressed in his finger-tips. They felt little dents that filled up slowly.

"It's nothing," said Paul.

"You feel," said Dawson.

Paul tried with his fingers. It made little dents.

"Hm!" he said.

"Rotten, isn't it?" said Dawson.

"Why? It's nothing much."

"You're not much of a man with water in your legs."

"I can't see as it makes any difference," said Morel. "I've got a weak chest."

He returned to his own bed.

"I suppose the rest of me's all right," said Dawson, and he put out the light.

In the morning it was raining. Morel packed his bag. The sun was grey and shaggy and dismal. He seemed to be curling himself off from life more and more. It gave him a wicked pleasure to do it.

The two men were at the station. Clara stepped out of the train, and came along the platform, very erect and coldly composed. She wore a long coat and a turned hat. Both men bowed her for her composure. Paul shook hands with her at the barrier. Dawson was leaning against the bookrack, watching. His black overcoat was buttoned up to the chin because of the rain. He was pale, with almost a touch of nobility in his quietness. He came forward, limping slightly.

"You ought to look better than this," she said.

"Oh, I'm all right now."

The three stood at a loss. She kept the two men looking near her.

"Shall we go to the lodging straight off," said Paul, "or somewhere else?"

"We may as well go home," said Dawson.

Paul walked on the outside of the pavement, then Dawson, then Clara. They made polite conversation. The dining-room faced the sea, whose tide, grey and shaggy, bowed not far off.

Morel swung up the big iron-chain.

"Sit down, Jack," he said.

"I don't want that chair," said Dawson.

"Sit down!" Morel repeated.

Clara took off her things and laid them on the couch. She had a slight air of resentment. Lifting her hair with her fingers, she sat down, rather aloof and composed. Paul ran downstairs to speak to the landlady.

"I should think you're cold," said Dawson to his wife. "Come nearer to the fire."

"Thank you, I'm quite warm," she answered.

She looked out of the window at the rain and at the sea.

"When are you going back?" she asked.

"Well, the rooms are taken until to-morrow, so he wants me to stop. He's going back to-night."

"And then you're thinking of going to Sheffield?"

"Yes."

"Are you fit to start work?"

"I'm going to start."

"You've really got a place?"

"Yes—begin on Monday."

"You don't look fit."

"Why don't I?"

She looked again out of the window instead of answering.

"And have you got lodgings in Sheffield?"

"Yes."

Again she looked away out of the window. The papers were blurred with weeping rain.

"And can you manage all right?" she asked.

"I'd think so. I'll have to!"

They were silent when Mabel returned.

"I shall go by the four-twenty," he said as he started.

Nobody answered.

"I wish you'd take your boots off," he said to Clara. "There's a pair of slippers of mine."

"Thank you," she said. "They aren't wet."

He put the slippers near her feet. She felt them there.

Mabel sat down. Both the men seemed helpless, and each of them had a rather hunted look. But Davies now carried himself quietly, seemed to yield himself, while Paul seemed to square himself up. Clara thought she had never seen him look so small and mean. He was as if trying to get himself into the smallest possible compass. And as he went about arranging, and as he sat talking, there seemed something false about him and out of tune. Wandering his unknown, she said to herself there was no stability about him. He was fine in his way, passionate, and able to give her drinks of pure life when he was in one mood. And now he looked paltry and insignificant. There was nothing stable about him. Her husband had more manly dignity. At any rate he did not walt about with any wind. There was something conventional about Mabel, she thought, something shifting and false. He would never make sure ground for any woman to stand on. She dropped him rather like his drinking together, getting smaller. Her husband at least was manly, and when he was better gave her the

this other would never own to being beaten. He would shift round and round, grow, get smaller. She despised him. And yet she watched him rather than Dawn, and it seemed as if their three later lay in his hands. She hated him for it.

She seemed to understand better now about men, and what they could or would do. She was less afraid of them, more sure of herself. That they were not the small spirits she had imagined them made her more comfortable. She had learned a good deal—almost as much as she wanted to learn. Her cup had been full. It was still as full as she could carry. On the whole, she would not be sorry when he was gone.

They had dinner, and sat eating and drinking by the fire. Not a serious word had been spoken. Yet Clara realised that Moor was withdrawing from her circle, leaving her the option to stay with her husband. It angered her. He was a man before, after all, to take what he wanted and then give her back. She did not remember that she herself had had what she wanted, and really, at the bottom of her heart, wished to be given back.

Paul felt cramped up and lonely. His mother had really supported his life. He had loved her; they two had, in fact, faced the world together. Now she was gone, and for ever behind him was the gap in life, the tear in the veil, through which his life seemed to drift slowly, as if he were drawn towards death. He wanted someone of their own free initiative to help him. The lesser things he began to let go from him, for fear of this big thing, the lapse towards death, following in the wake of his beloved. Clara could not stand for him to hold on to. She wanted him, but not to understand him. He felt she wanted the man on top, not the real him that was in trouble. That would be too much trouble to her; he dared not give it her. She could not cope with him. It made him ashamed, so, secretly ashamed because he was in such a mess, because his own hold on life was so unsure, because nobody held him, feeling unsustained, shadowy, as if he did not count for much in this concrete world, he drew himself together tighter and smaller. He did not want to die; he would not give in. But he was not afraid of death. If nobody would help, he would go on alone.

Dawn had been driven to the extremity of life, until he was afraid. He could go to the brink of death, he could lie on the edge and look in. Then, cowed, afraid, he had to crawl back, and like a beggar take what offered. There was a certain nobility in it. As Clara saw, he could himself become, and he wanted to be taken back whether or not. That she could do for him.

It was three o'clock.

"I am going by the fourteenth," said Paul again to Clara.
 "Are you coming then or leave?"

"I don't know," she said.

"I'm meeting my father in Nottingham at seven-fifteen," he said.

"Then," she answered, "I'll come later."

Dawson jerked suddenly, as if he had been held on a streak. He looked out over the sea, but he saw nothing.

"There were one or two boats in the corner," said Alfred.
 "I've done with 'em."

At about four o'clock he went.

"I shall see you both later," he said, as he shook hands.

"I suppose so," said Dawson. "An' perhaps—some day—I'll be able to pay you back the money as—"

"I shall come for it, you'll see," laughed Paul. "I'll be on the rocks before I'm very much older."

"Ay—well——" said Dawson.

"Good-bye," he said to Clara.

"Good-bye," she said, giving him her hand. Then she glanced at him for the last time, dumb and horrible.

He was gone. Dawson and his wife sat down again.

"It's a nasty day for travelling," said the man.

"Yea," she answered.

They talked in a desultory fashion until it grew dark. The landlady brought in the tea. Dawson drew up his chair to the table without being invited, like a husband. Then he sat heavily waiting for his cup. She served him as she would, like a wife, not consulting his wish.

After tea, as it drew near to six o'clock, he went to the window. All was dark outside. The sea was roaring.

"It's raining yet," he said.

"Is it?" she answered.

"You won't go to-night, shall you?" he said, hesitating.

She did not answer. He walked.

"I shouldn't go in this rain," he said.

"Do you want me to stay?" she asked.

His hand as he held the dark curtain trembled.

"Yea," he said.

He remained with his back to her. She rose and went slowly to him. He let go the curtain, turned, hesitating, towards her. She stood with her hands behind her back, looking up at him in a heavy, inevitable fashion.

"Do you want me, Baxter?" she asked.

His voice was hoarse as he answered:

"Do you want to come back to me?"

She made a moaning noise, lifted her arms, and put them round his neck, drawing him to her. He hid his face on her shoulder, holding her clasped.

"Take me back!" she whispered, frantic. "Take me back, take me back!" And she put her fingers through his fine, thin dark hair, as if she were only semi-conscious. He tightened his grasp on her.

"Do you want me again?" he murmured, broken.

Doppelgänger

CLARA went with her husband to Sheffield, and Paulineously came her again. Walter Morel seemed to have let all the trouble go over him, and there he was, crawling about on the mud of it, just the same. There was scarcely any bond between father and son, save that each felt he must not let the other go in any actual want. As there was no one to keep on the house, and as they could neither of them bear the compulsion of the home, Paul took lodging in Nottingham, and Morel went to live with a friendly family in Bestwood.

Everything seemed to have gone straight for the young man. He could not paint. The picture he finished on the day of his mother's death—one that satisfied him—was the last thing he did. As work there was no Clara. When he came home he could not take up his brushes again. There was nothing left.

So he was always in the town at one place or another, drinking, knocking about with the men he knew. It really worried him. He talked to barmaids, to almost any woman, but there was that dark, wrinkled look in his eyes, as if he were hunting something.

Everything seemed so different, so unreal. There seemed no reason why people should go along the street, and houses pile up in the daylight. There seemed no reason why these things should occupy the space, instead of leaving it empty. His friends talked to him; he heard the sounds, and he answered. But why there should be the noise of speech he could not understand.

He was most himself when he was alone, or working hard and mechanically at the factory. In the latter case there was pure *Sorglosigkeit*, when he lapsed from consciousness. But it had to come to an end. It hurt him so, that things had lost their reality. The first snowdrops came. He saw the tiny drop-pears among the grey. They would have given him the liveliest emotion at one time. Now they were there, but they did not seem to mean anything. In a few moments they would cease to occupy that place, and just the space would be, where they had been. Tall, brilliant tram-cars ran along the street at night. It seemed almost a wonder they should trouble to run backwards and forwards. "Why

trouble to go sitting down in Trest Bridge?" he asked of the big woman. It seemed they just as well might not be as he.

The real thing was the dark darkness at night. That seemed to him whole and comprehensible and real. He could leave himself to it. Suddenly a piece of paper started near his feet and blew along down the pavement. He stood still, rigid, with dimmed eyes, a flame of agony going over him. And he saw again the sickness, his mother, his eyes. Unconsciously he had been with her, in her company. The wild leap of the paper scolded him she was gone. But he had been with her. He wanted everything to stand still, so that he could be with her again.

The days passed, the weeks. But everything seemed to have stood, gone into a conglomerated mass. He could not tell one day from another, one week from another, hardly one place from another. Nothing was distinct or distinguishable. Often he lay himself for an hour at a time, could not remember what he had done.

One evening he came home late to his lodging. The fire was burning low; everybody was in bed. He threw on some more coal, glanced at the table, and decided he wanted no supper. Then he sat down to the armchair. It was perfectly still. He did not know anything, yet he saw the dim smoke wavering up the chimney. Presently two mice came out, cautiously, nibbling the fallen crumbs. He watched them as it were from a long way off. The clock struck two. Far away he could hear the sharp clinking of the trucks on the railway. No, it was not they that were far away. They were there in their place. But where was he himself?

The time passed. The two mice, cowering wildly, scampered chastely over his slippers. He had not moved a muscle. He did not want to move. He was not thinking of anything. It was safer so. There was no wrench of knowing anything. Then, from time to time, some other consciousness, working mechanically, flaked into sharp phrases.

"What am I doing?"

And out of the semi-organized trance came the answer:

"Destroying myself."

Then a dull, live feeling, gone in an instant, told him that it was wrong. After a while, suddenly came the question:

"Why wrong?"

Again there was no answer, but a stroke of hot stubbornness inside his chest refused his own annihilation.

There was a sound of a heavy cart clanking down the road. Suddenly the electric light went out; there was a bustling sound

in the paralytic-like-station. He did not stir, but sat gazing in front of him. Only the mice had awaked, and the fire glowed red in the dark room.

Then, quite mechanically and more distinctly, the conversation began again inside him.

"She's dead. What was it all for—her struggle?"

"That was his daughter wanting to go after her."

"You're alive?"

"She's not."

"She is—in you."

Suddenly he felt fired with the burden of it.

"You've got to keep alive for her sake," said the will in him.

Something felt sulky, as if it would not mean.

"You've got to carry forward her living, and what she had done, go on with it."

But he did not want to. He wanted to give up.

"But you can go on with your painting," said the will in him.

"Or else you can help children. They both carry on her effort."

"Painting is not living."

"That live."

"Marry whom?" came the sulky question.

"As best you can."

"Whom?"

But he did not trust that.

He rose suddenly, went straight to bed. When he got inside his bedroom and closed the door, he stood with clenched fist.

"Mother, my dear——" he began, with the whole force of his soul. Then he stopped. He would not say it. He would not admit that he wanted to die, to have done. He would not own that life had beaten him, or that death had beaten him.

Going straight to bed, he slept at once, abandoning himself to the sleep.

So the weeks went on. Always alone, his soul vacillated, first on the side of death, then on the side of life, doggedly. The real agony was that he had nowhere to go, nothing to do, nothing to say, and was nothing himself. Sometimes he ran down the streets as if he were mad: sometimes he was mad; things weren't there, things were there. It made him panic. Sometimes he stood before the bar of the public-house where he had called for a drink. Everything suddenly stood back away from him. He saw the face of the barmaid, the gabbling-drinkers, his own glass on the stopped, mahogany board, in the distance. There was something between him and them. He could not get into touch. He did not want them: he did not want his drink. Turning abruptly, he went out.

On the threshold he stood and looked at the lighted street. But he was not of it or in it. Something separated him. Everything went on *there* before those lamps, that away from him. He could not get at them. He felt he couldn't touch the lamp-posts, not if he reached. Where could he go? There was nowhere to go, neither back into the inn, or forward anywhere. He felt stifled. There was nowhere for him. The street grew inside him; he felt he should smash.

"I *mustn't*," he said; and, turning blindly, he went in and drank. Sometimes the drink did him good; sometimes it made him worse. He ran down the road. For ever restless, he went here, there, everywhere. He determined to work. But when he had made six strokes, he loathed the pencil violently, got up, and went away, hawking off as a club where he could play cards or billiards, to a place where he could flirt with a barmaid who was no more to him than the brass pump-handle she drove.

He was very thin and lantern-jawed. He dared not meet his own eyes in the mirror; he never looked at himself. He wanted to get away from himself, but there was nothing to get hold of. In despair he thought of Marian. Perhaps—perhaps——?

Then, happening to go into the Unitarian Church one Sunday evening, when they stood up to sing the second hymn he saw her before him. The light glimmered on her lower lip as she sang. She looked as if she had got something, at any rate: some hope in heaven, if not in earth. Her comfort and her life seemed in the after-world. A warm, strong feeling for her came up. She seemed to yearn, at the song, for the mystery and comfort. He put his hope in her. He longed for the woman to be over, to speak to her.

The throng carried her out just before him. He could nearly touch her. She did not know he was there. He saw the brown, burnable nape of her neck under its black curls. He would leave himself to her. She was better and bigger than he. He would depend on her.

She went wandering, in her blind way, through the little throngs of people outside the church. She always looked at him and not of place among people. He went forward and put his hand on her arm. She started violently. Her great brown eyes dilated in fear, then went questioning at the sight of him. He shrunk slightly from her.

"I didn't know——" she faltered.

"Nor I," he said.

He looked away. His sudden, flaring hope sank again.

"What are you doing in town?" he asked.

"I'm staying at Cousin Anne's."

"He! For long?"

"No; only till to-morrow."

"What you go straight home!"

She looked at him, then hid her face under her hat-brim.

"No," she said—"no; it's not necessary."

He turned away, and she went with him. They strolled through the throng of church-people. The organ was still sounding in St. Mary's. Dark figures came through the lighted doors; people were coming down the steps. The large coloured windows glowed up in the night. The church was like a great lantern suspended. They went down Hollow Lane, and he took the car for the bridge.

"You will just have supper with me," he said: "then I'll bring you back."

"Very well," she replied, low and husky.

They scarcely spoke while they were on the car. The Trent ran dark and still under the bridge. Away towards Colwick all was black night. He lived down Bolser Road, on the naked edge of the town, facing across the river meadows towards Sleaford. Hereings and the steep scarp of Colwick Wood. The floods were out. The slow water and the darkness spread away on their left. Almost afraid, they hurried along by the houses.

Supper was laid. He raised the curtain over the window. There was a bowl of ivy-leaf and scarlet anemones on the table. She bent to them. Still reaching them with her finger-tips, she looked up at him, saying:

"Anne's they beautiful!"

"Yes," he said. "What will you drink—coffee?"

"I should like it," she said.

"Then excuse me a moment."

He went out to the kitchen.

Miriam took off her things and looked round. It was a bare, uneven room. Her photos, Clara's, Anne's, were on the wall. She looked on the dressing-board to see what he was doing. There were only a few meaningless lines. She looked to see what books he was reading. Evidently just an ordinary novel. The letters in the rack she saw were from Anne, Arthur, and from some man or other she did not know. Everything he had touched, everything that was in the least personal to him, she examined with lingering absorption. He had been gone from her for so long, she wanted to rediscover him, his position, what he was now. But there was not much in the room to help her. It only made her feel rather odd, it was so hard and comfortable.

She was curiously examining a sketch-book when he returned with the coffee.

"There's nothing new in it," he said, "and nothing very interesting."

He put down the tray, and went to look over her shoulder. She turned the pages slowly, intent on examining everything.

"H'm!" he said, as she paused at a sketch. "I'd imagine that. It's not bad, is it?"

"No," she said. "I don't quite understand it."

He took the book from her and went through it. Again he made a curious sound of surprise and pleasure.

"There's some not bad stuff in there," he said.

"Not at all bad," she answered gravely.

He felt again her interest in his work. Or was it for himself? Why was she always most interested in him as he appeared in his work?

They sat down to supper.

"By the way," he said, "didn't I hear something about your earning your own living?"

"Yes," she replied, bowing her dark head over her cup.

"And what of it?"

"I'm merely going to the farming college at Birmingham for three months, and I shall probably be kept on as a teacher there."

"I say—that sounds all right for you! You always wanted to be independent."

"Yes."

"Why didn't you tell me?"

"I only knew last week."

"But I heard a month ago," he said.

"Yes; but nothing was settled then."

"I should have thought," he said, "you'd have told me you were trying."

She ate her food in the deliberate, constrained way, almost as if she needed a little from doing anything so publicly, that he knew as well.

"I suppose you're glad," he said.

"Very glad."

"Yes—it will be something."

He was rather disappointed.

"I think it will be a great deal," she said, almost brightly, cheerfully.

He laughed shortly.

"Why do you think it won't?" she asked.

"Oh, I don't think it won't be a great deal. Only you'll find earning your own living isn't everything."

"No," she said, swallowing with difficulty; "I don't suppose it is."

"I suppose work can be nearly everything to a man," he said, "though it isn't to me. But a woman only works with a part of herself. The real and vital part is covered up."

"But a man can give all himself to a work?" she asked.

"Yes, practically."

"And a woman only the unimportant part of herself?"

"That's it."

She looked up at him, and her eyes glared with anger.

"Then," she said, "if it's true, it's a great shame."

"It is. But I don't know everything," he answered.

After supper they drove up to the farm. He wearing her a chain facing him, and they sat down. She was wearing a dress of dark claret colour, that suited her dark complexion and her large features. Still, the dark were less and less, but her face was much older, the brown throat much thinner. She seemed old to him, older than Clara. Her bloom of youth had quietly gone. A sort of stiffness, almost of woodenness, had come upon her. She meditated a little while, then looked at him.

"And how are things with you?" she asked.

"About all right," he answered.

She looked at him, waiting.

"Nay," she said, very low.

Her brown, nervous hands were clasped over her knees. They had still the look of confidence or repose, the almost hysterical look. He winced as he saw them. Then he laughed merrily. She put her fingers between her lips. His slim, black, tortured body lay quite still in the chair. She suddenly took her finger from her mouth and looked at him.

"And you have broken off with Clara?"

"Yes."

His body lay like an abandoned thing, striven in the chair.

"You know," she said, "I think we ought to be married."

He opened his eyes for the first time since many months, and stared at her with respect.

"Why?" he said.

"See," she said, "how you waste yourself? You might be ill, you might die, and I never know—be no more than that if I had never known you."

"And if we married?" he asked.

"At any rate, I could prevent you wasting yourself and being a prey to other women—like Clara."

"A prey?" he repeated, smiling.

She bowed her head in shame. His lay feeling his despair come up again.

"I'm not sure," he said slowly, "that marriage would be much good."

"I only think of you," she replied.

"I know you do. But—you love me so much, you want to put me in your pocket. And I should die there smothered."

She bent her hand, put her finger between her lips, while the crimson surged up in her heart.

"And what will you do otherwise?" she asked.

"I don't know—go on, I suppose. Perhaps I shall soon go abroad."

The despairing doggedness in his tone made her go on her knees on the rug before the fire, very close to him. There she crouched as if she were crushed by something, and could not raise her head. His hands lay quiet inert on the arms of his chair. She was aware of them. She felt that now he lay at her mercy. If she could rise, take him, put her arms round him, and say, "You are mine," then he would leave himself to her. But dare she? She could easily sacrifice herself. But dare she assert herself? She was aware of his dark-clothed, slender body, that seemed one stroke of life, stretched in the chair close to her. But now she dared not put her arms round it, take it up, and say, "It is mine, this body. Leave it to me!" And she waited on. It defied to all her woman's instinct. But she crouched, and dared not. She was afraid he would not let her. She was afraid it was too much. He lay there, his body, abandoned. She knew she ought to take it up and claim it, and claim every right to it. But—could she do it? Her impotence before him, before the strong demand of some unknown thing in him, was her extremity. Her hands fluttered; she half lifted her head. Her eyes, shuddering, appealing, gazed almost distracted, pleaded to him suddenly. His heart caught with pity. He took her hands, drew her to him, and comforted her.

"Will you have me, is marry me?" he said very low.

Oh, why did not he take her? Her very soul belonged to him. Why would he not take what was his? She had borne so long the cruelty of belonging to him and not being claimed by him. Now he was asking her again. It was too much for her. She drew back her head, held his face between her hands, and looked him in the eyes. No, he was hard. He wanted something else. She pleaded to him with all her love and to make it his choice. She could not cope with it, with him, she knew not with what. But it strained her till she felt she would break.

"Do you want it?" she asked, very gravely.

"Not much," he replied, with pain.

She turned her face aside; then, raising herself with dignity, she took his head in her bosom, and rocked him softly. She was not to have him, then! So she could comfort him. She put her fingers through his hair. For her, the agonised symptoms of self-sacrifice. For him, the hate and misery of another failure. He could not bear it—that breast which was warm and which cradled him without taking the burden of him. So much he wanted to rest on her that the filth of sin only uncovered him. He drew away.

"And without marriage we can do nothing?" he asked.

His mouth was lifted from his teeth with pain. She put her little finger between her lips.

"No," she said, low and like the toll of a bell. "No, I think not."

It was the end then between them. She could not take him and relieve him of the responsibility of himself. She could only sacrifice herself to him—sacrifice herself every day, gladly. And that he did not want. He wanted her to hold him and say, with joy and authority: "Sleep all this restlessness and bearing against death. You are mine for a while." She had not the strength. Or was it a state she wanted? or did she want a Christ in him?

He felt, in leaving her, he was defrauding her of life. But he knew that, in staying, stifling the inner, desperate man, he was denying his own life. And he did not hope to give life to her by denying his own.

She sat very quiet. He lit a cigarette. The smoke went up from it, wavering. He was thinking of his mother, and had forgotten Miriam. She suddenly looked at him. Her bitterness came surging up. Her sacrifice, then, was useless. He lay there alone, careless about her. Suddenly she saw again his lack of religion, his restless instability. He would destroy himself like a perverse child. Well, then, he would!

"I think I must go," she said softly.

By her tone he knew she was denying him. He rose quietly.

"I'll come along with you," he answered.

The room before the mirror gazing on her hat. How bitter, how unutterably bitter, it made her that he rejected her sacrificed life ahead looked dead, as if the glow were gone out. She bowed her face over the flowers—the flowers so sweet and spring-like, the steady sweetness floating over the table. It was like her to have those flowers.

He moved about the room with a certain sweetness of touch, soft and relentless and quiet. She knew she could not cope with him. He would escape like a weed out of her hands. Yet without him, her life would trail on lifeless. Breeding, she touched the flowers.

"Have them!" he said; and he took them out of the jar, dripping as they were, and went quickly into the kitchen. She waited for him, took the flowers, and they went out together, he talking, she feeling dull.

She was going from him now. In her misery she leaned against him as they sat on the car. He was unresponsive. Where would he go? What would be the end of him? She could not bear it, the vacant feeling where he should be. He was so foolish, so wonderful, never at peace with himself! And now where would he go? And what did he care that he wanted her? He had no religion; it was all for the moment's attraction that he cared, making this, nothing deeper. Well, she would wait and see how it turned out with him. When he had had enough he would give in and come to her.

He shook hands and left her at the door of her cousin's house. When he turned away he felt the hot hold for him had gone. The moon, as he sat upon the car, stretched away over the bay of railway, a level forest of light. Beyond the town the country, little unobscuring spots for eyes alone—the sea—the night—no end on! And he had no place in it! Wherever spot he stood on, there he stood alone. From his breast, from his stomach, sprang the endless space, and it was there behind him, everywhere. The people hurrying along the streets offered no obstruction to the void in which he found himself. They were small shadows whose footstep and voices could be heard, but in each of them the same night, the same silence. He got off the car. In the country all was dead still. Little stars shone high up; little stars spread far away in the flood-western, a firmament below. Everywhere the vastness and terror of the immense night which is round and silent for a brief while by the day, but which returns, and will remain at last eternal, taking everything in its silence and its living glow. There was no Time, only Space. Who could say his mother had lived and did not live? She had been in one place, and was in another; that was all. And his soul could not leave her, wherever she was. Now she was gone ahead into the night, and he was with her still. They were together. But yet there was his body, his chest, that leaned against the stile, his hands on the wooden bar. They seemed stretching. Where was he!—one tiny upright speck of flesh, less than an ear of wheat lost in the field. He could not

hear it. On every side the human dark silence seemed pressing him, so tiny a spark, less existence, and yet, almost nothing, he could not be extinct. Night, in which everything was lost, were reaching out, beyond stars and sun. Stars and sun, a few bright grains, were spinning round the center, and holding each other in substance, there is a darkness that outpoured them all, and left them tiny and daunted. So much, and himself, infinitesimal, at the core of nothingness, and yet not nothing.

"Mother!" he whispered—"mother!"

She was the only thing that held him up, himself, amid all this. And she was gone, intermingled herself. He wanted her to touch him, have him alongside with her.

But no, he would not give in. Turning sharply, he walked towards the city's gold phosphorescence. His feet were shut, his mouth set fast. He would not take that direction, to the darkness, to follow her. He walked towards the faintly humming, glowing town, quickly.

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